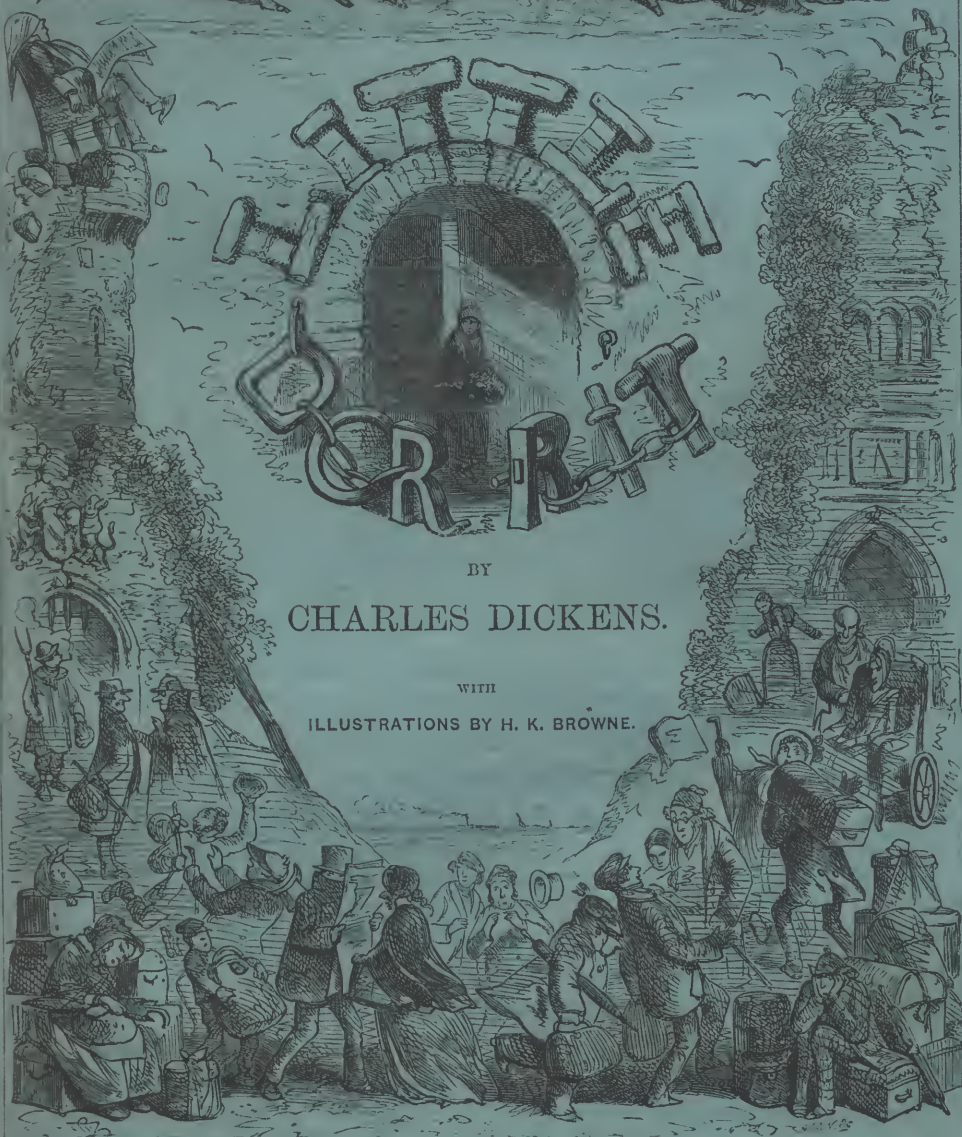




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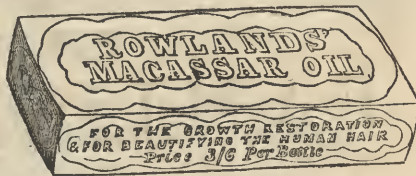
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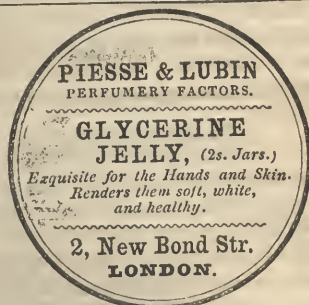
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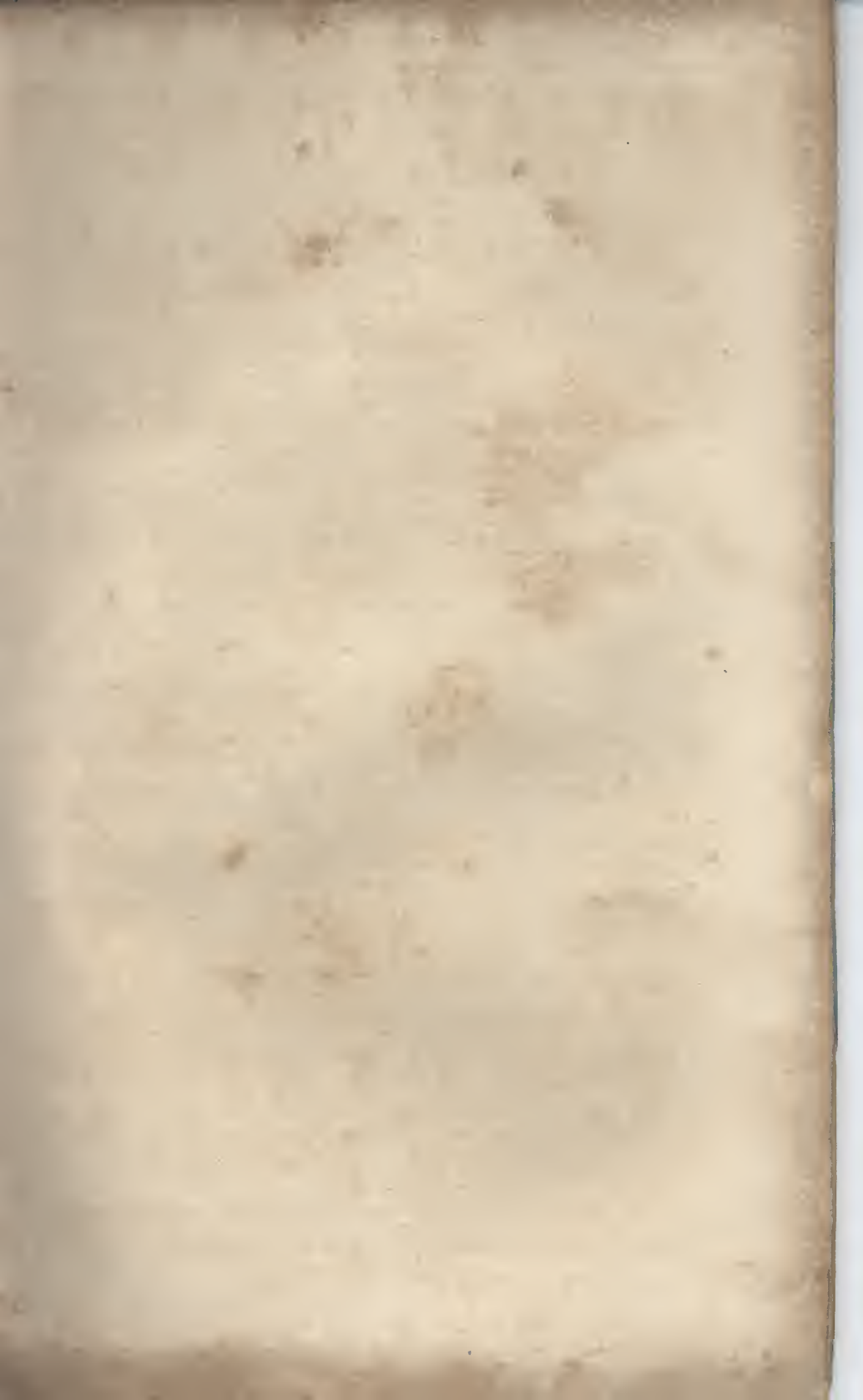
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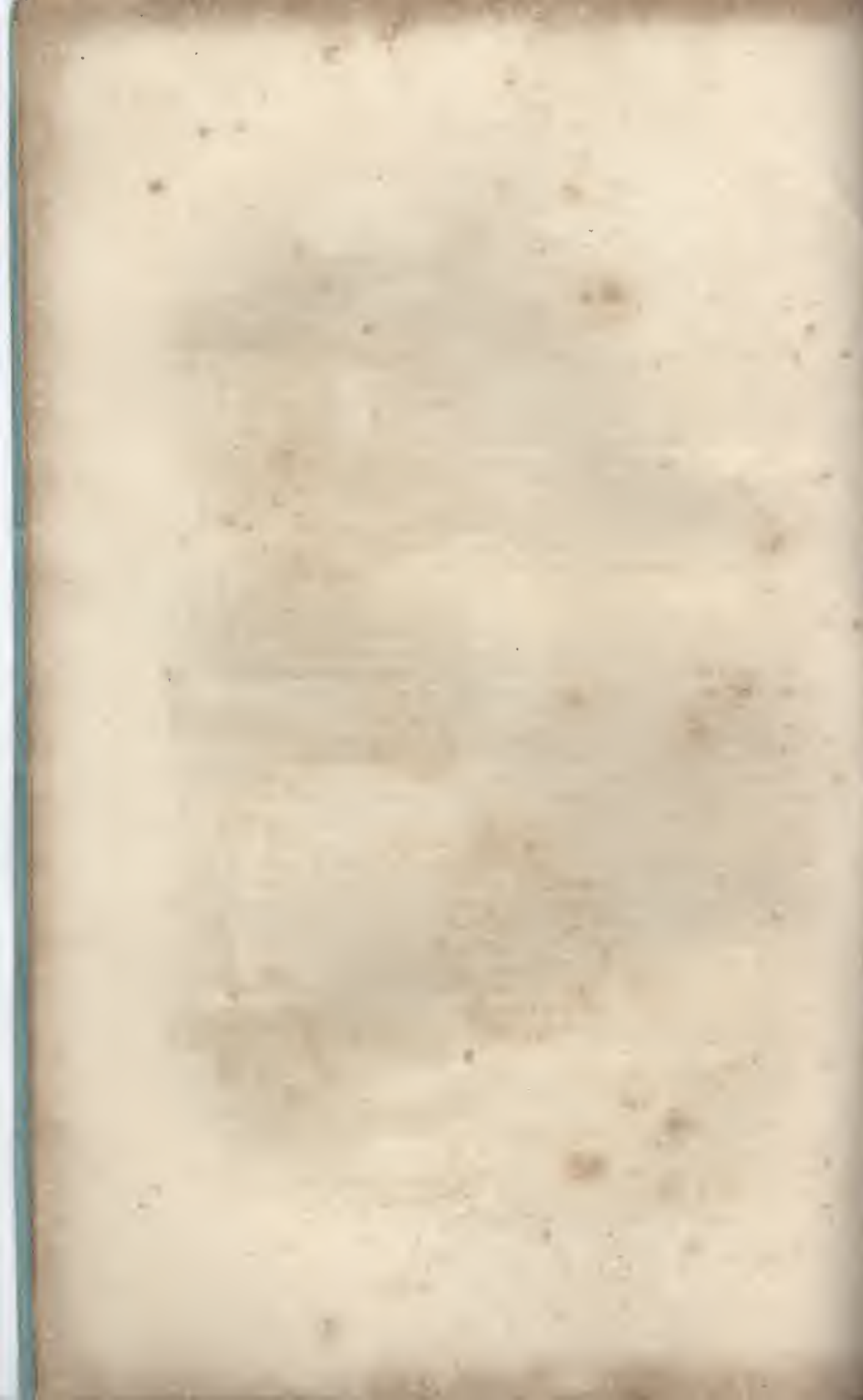




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Mr. Sparkler under a reverse of circumstances.



CHAPTER V.

SOMETHING WRONG SOMEWHERE.

THE family had been a month or two at Venice, when Mr. Dorrit, who was much among Counts and Marquises, and had but scant leisure, set an hour of one day apart, beforehand, for the purpose of holding some conference with Mrs. General.

The time he had reserved in his mind arriving, he sent Mr. Tinkler, his valet, to Mrs. General's apartment (which would have absorbed about a third of the area of the Marshalsea), to present his compliments to that lady, and represent him as desiring the favor of an interview. It being that period of the forenoon when the various members of the family had coffee in their own chambers, some couple of hours before assembling at breakfast in a faded hall which had once been sumptuous but was now the prey of watery vapours and a settled melancholy, Mrs. General was accessible to the valet. That envoy found her on a little square of carpet, so extremely diminutive in reference to the size of her stone and marble floor, that she looked as if she might have had it spread for the trying on of a ready-made pair of shoes; or as if she had come into possession of the enchanted piece of carpet, bought for forty purses by one of the three princes in the Arabian Nights, and had that moment been transported on it, at a wish, into a palatial saloon with which it had no connexion.

Mrs. General, replying to the envoy, as she set down her empty coffee-cup, that she was willing at once to proceed to Mr. Dorrit's apartment, and spare him the trouble of coming to her (which, in his gallantry, he had proposed), the envoy threw open the door, and escorted Mrs. General to the presence. It was quite a walk, by mysterious staircases and corridors, from Mrs. General's apartment,—hoodwinked by a narrow side street with a low gloomy bridge in it, and dungeon-like opposite tenements, their walls besmeared with a thousand downward stains and streaks, as if every crazy aperture in them had been weeping tears of rust into the Adriatic for centuries,—to Mr. Dorrit's apartment: with a whole English house-front of window, a prospect of beautiful church-domes rising into the blue sky sheer out of the water which reflected them, and a hushed murmur of the Grand Canal laving the doorways below, where his gondolas and gondoliers attended his pleasure, drowsily swinging in a little forest of piles.

Mr. Dorrit, in a resplendent dressing-gown and cap—the dormant grub that had so long bided its time among the Collegians had burst into a rare butterfly—rose to receive Mrs. General. A chair to Mrs. General. An easier chair, sir; what are you doing, what are you about, what do you mean? Now, leave us!

"Mrs. General," said Mr. Dorrit, "I took the liberty——"

"By no means," Mrs. General interposed. "I was quite at your disposition. I had had my coffee."

"I took the liberty," said Mr. Dorrit again, with the magnificent placidity of one who was above correction,* "to solicit the favor of a little private conversation with you, because I feel rather worried respecting my—ha—my younger daughter. You will have observed a great difference of temperament, madam, between my two daughters?"

Said Mrs. General in response, crossing her gloved hands (she was never without gloves, and they never creased and always fitted), "There is a great difference."

"May I ask to be favored with your view of it?" said Mr. Dorrit, with a deference not incompatible with majestic serenity.

"Fanny," returned Mrs. General, "has force of character and self-reliance. Amy, none."

None? O Mrs. General, ask the Marshalsea stones and bars. O Mrs. General, ask the milliner who taught her to work, and the dancing-master who taught her sister to dance. O Mrs. General, Mrs. General, ask me, her father, what I owe to her; and hear my testimony touching the life of this slighted little creature, from her childhood up!

No such adjuration entered Mr. Dorrit's head. He looked at Mrs. General, seated in her usual erect attitude on her coachbox behind the proprieties, and he said in a thoughtful manner, "True, madam."

"I would not," said Mrs. General, "be understood to say, observe, that there is nothing to improve in Fanny. But there is material there—perhaps, indeed, a little too much."

"Will you be kind enough, madam," said Mr. Dorrit, "to be—ha—more explicit? I do not quite understand my elder daughter's having—hum—too much material. What material?"

"Fanny," returned Mrs. General, "at present forms too many opinions. Perfect breeding forms none, and is never demonstrative."

Lest he himself should be found deficient in perfect breeding, Mr. Dorrit hastened to reply, "Unquestionably, madam, you are right." Mrs. General returned, in her emotionless and expressionless manner, "I believe so."

"But you are aware, my dear madam," said Mr. Dorrit, "that my daughters had the misfortune to lose their lamented mother when they were very young; and that, in consequence of my not having been until lately the recognised heir to my property, they have lived with me as a comparatively poor, though always proud, gentleman, in—ha hum—retirement!"

"I do not," said Mrs. General, "lose sight of the circumstance."

"Madam," pursued Mr. Dorrit, "of my daughter Fanny, under her present guidance and with such an example constantly before her—"

(Mrs. General shut her eyes.)

—"I have no misgivings. There is adaptability of character in Fanny. But my younger daughter, Mrs. General, rather worries and vexes my thoughts. I must inform you that she has always been my favorite."

"There is no accounting," said Mrs. General, "for these partialities."

"Ha—no," assented Mr. Dorrit. "No. Now, madam, I am troubled by noticing that Amy is not, so to speak, one of ourselves. She does not care to go about with us; she is lost in the society we have here; our tastes are evidently not her tastes. Which," said Mr. Dorrit, summing up with judicial gravity, "is to say, in other words, that there is something wrong in—ha—Amy."

"May we incline to the supposition," said Mrs. General, with a little touch of varnish, "that something is referable to the novelty of the position?"

"Excuse me, madam," observed Mr. Dorrit, rather quickly. "The daughter of a gentleman, though—ha—himself at one time comparatively far from affluent—comparatively—and herself reared in—hum—retirement, need not of necessity find this position so very novel."

"True," said Mrs. General, "true."

"Therefore, madam," said Mr. Dorrit, "I took the liberty" (he laid an emphasis on the phrase and repeated it, as though he stipulated, with urbane firmness, that he must not be contradicted again), "I took the liberty of requesting this interview, in order that I might mention the topic to you, and enquire how you would advise me?"

"Mr. Dorrit," returned Mrs. General, "I have conversed with Amy several times since we have been residing here, on the general subject of the formation of a demeanor. She has expressed herself to me as wondering exceedingly at Venice. I have mentioned to her that it is better not to wonder. I have pointed out to her that the celebrated Mr. Eustace, the classical tourist, did not think much of it; and that he compared the Rialto, greatly to its disadvantage, with Westminster and Blackfriars Bridges. I need not add, after what you have said, that I have not yet found my arguments successful. You do me the honor to ask me what I advise. It always appears to me (if this should prove to be a baseless assumption, I shall be pardoned), that Mr. Dorrit has been accustomed to exercise influence over the minds of others."

"Hum—madam," said Mr. Dorrit, "I have been at the head of—ha—of a considerable community. You are right in supposing that I am not unaccustomed to—an influential position."

"I am happy," returned Mrs. General, "to be so corroborated. I would therefore the more confidently recommend, that Mr. Dorrit should speak to Amy himself, and make his observations and wishes known to her. Being his favorite besides, and no doubt attached to him, she is all the more likely to yield to his influence."

"I had anticipated your suggestion, madam," said Mr. Dorrit, "but—ha—was not sure that I might—hum—not enroach on——"

"On my province, Mr. Dorrit?" said Mrs. General, graciously. "Do not mention it."

"Then, with your leave, madam," resumed Mr. Dorrit, ringing his little bell to summon his valet, "I will send for her at once."

"Does Mr. Dorrit wish me to remain?"

"Perhaps, if you have no other engagement, you would not object for a minute or two——"

"Not at all."

So, Tinkler the valet was instructed to find Miss Amy's maid, and to request that subordinate to inform Miss Amy that Mr. Dorrit wished to see her in his own room. In delivering this charge to Tinkler, Mr. Dorrit looked severely at him, and also kept a jealous eye upon him until he went out at the door, mistrusting that he might have something in his mind prejudicial to the family dignity; that he might have even got wind of some Collegiate joke before he came into the service, and might be derisively reviving its remembrance at the present moment. If Tinkler had happened to smile, however faintly and innocently, nothing would have persuaded Mr. Dorrit, to the hour of his death, but that this was the case. As Tinkler happened, however, very fortunately for himself, to be of a serious and composed countenance, he escaped the secret danger that threatened him. And as on his return—when Mr. Dorrit eyed him again—he announced Miss Amy as if she had come to a funeral, he left a vague impression on Mr. Dorrit's mind that he was a well-conducted young fellow, who had been brought up in the study of his Catechism, by a widowed mother.

"Amy," said Mr. Dorrit, "you have just now been the subject of some conversation between myself and Mrs. General. We agree that you scarcely seem at home here. Ha—how is this?"

A pause.

"I think, father, I require a little time."

"Papa is a preferable mode of address," observed Mrs. General. "Father is rather vulgar, my dear. The word Papa, besides, gives a pretty form to the lips. Papa, potatoes, poultry, prunes, and prism, are all very good words for the lips: especially prunes and prism. You will find it serviceable, in the formation of a demeanor, if you sometimes say to yourself in company—on entering a room, for instance—Papa, potatoes, poultry, prunes and prism, prunes and prism."

"Pray, my child," said Mr. Dorrit, "attend to the—hum—precepts of Mrs. General."

Poor little Dorrit, with a rather forlorn glance at that eminent varnisher, promised to try.

"You say, Amy," pursued Mr. Dorrit, "that you think you require time. Time for what?"

Another pause.

"To become accustomed to the novelty of my life, was all I meant," said Little Dorrit, with her loving eyes upon her father; whom she had very nearly addressed as poultry, if not prunes and prism too, in her desire to submit herself to Mrs. General and please him.

Mr. Dorrit frowned, and looked anything but pleased. "Amy," he returned, "it appears to me, I must say, that you have had abundance of time for that. Ha—you surprise me. You disappoint me. Fanny has conquered any such little difficulties, and—hum—why not you?"

"I hope I shall do better soon," said Little Dorrit.

"I hope so," returned her father. "I—ha—I most devoutly hope so, Amy. I sent for you, in order that I might say—hum—impressively say, in the presence of Mrs. General, to whom we are all so

much indebted for obligingly being present among us, on—ha—on this or any other occasion,” Mrs. General shut her eyes, “that I—ha hum—am not pleased with you. You make Mrs. General’s a thankless task. You—ha—embarrass me very much. You have always (as I have informed Mrs. General) been my favorite child; I have always made you a—hum—a friend and companion; in return, I beg—I—ha—I do beg, that you accommodate yourself better to—hum—circumstances, and dutifully do what becomes your—your station.”

Mr. Dorrit was even a little more fragmentary than usual; being excited on the subject, and anxious to make himself particularly emphatic.

“I do beg,” he repeated, “that this may be attended to, and that you will seriously take pains and try to conduct yourself in a manner both becoming your position as—ha—Miss Amy Dorrit, and satisfactory to myself and Mrs. General.”

That lady shut her eyes again, on being again referred to; then, slowly opening them and rising, added these words:

“If Miss Amy Dorrit will direct her own attention to, and will accept of my poor assistance in, the formation of a surface, Mr. Dorrit will have no further cause of anxiety. May I take this opportunity of remarking, as an instance in point, that it is scarcely delicate to look at vagrants with the attention which I have seen bestowed upon them, by a very dear young friend of mine? They should not be looked at. Nothing disagreeable should ever be looked at. Apart from such a habit standing in the way of that graceful equanimity of surface which is so expressive of good breeding, it hardly seems compatible with refinement of mind. A truly refined mind will seem to be ignorant of the existence of anything that is not perfectly proper, placid, and pleasant.” Having delivered this exalted sentiment, Mrs. General made a sweeping obeisance, and retired with an expression of mouth indicative of Prunes and Prism.

Little Dorrit, whether speaking or silent, had preserved her quiet earnestness and her loving look. It had not been clouded, except for a passing moment, until now. But now that she was left alone with him, the fingers of her lightly-folded hands were agitated, and there was repressed emotion in her face.

Not for herself. She might feel a little wounded, but her care was not for herself. Her thoughts still turned, as they always had turned, to him. A faint misgiving, which had hung about her since their accession to fortune, that even now she could never see him as he used to be before the prison days, had gradually begun to assume form in her mind. She felt, that, in what he had just now said to her, and in his whole bearing towards her, there was the well-known shadow of the Marshalsea wall. It took a new shape, but it was the old sad shadow. She began with sorrowful unwillingness to acknowledge to herself, that she was not strong enough to keep off the fear that no space in the life of man could overcome that quarter of a century behind the prison bars. She had no blame to bestow upon him, therefore: nothing to reproach him with, no emotions in her faithful heart but great compassion and unbounded tenderness.

This is why it was, that, even as he sat before her on his sofa, in the

brilliant light of a bright Italian day, the wonderful city without and the splendors of an old palace within, she saw him at the moment in the long-familiar gloom of his Marshalsea lodging, and wished to take her seat beside him, and comfort him, and be again full of confidence with him, and of usefulness to him. If he divined what was in her thoughts, his own were not in tune with it. After some uneasy moving in his seat, he got up, and walked about, looking very much dissatisfied.

"Is there anything else you wish to say to me, dear father?"

"No, no. Nothing else."

"I am sorry you have not been pleased with me, dear. I hope you will not think of me with displeasure now. I am going to try, more than ever, to adapt myself as you wish to what surrounds me—for indeed I have tried all along, though I have failed, I know."

"Amy," he returned, turning short upon her. "You—ha—habitually hurt me."

"Hurt you, father! I!"

"There is a—hum—a topic," said Mr. Dorrit, looking all about the ceiling of the room, and never at the attentive, uncomplainingly shocked face, "a painful topic, a series of events which I wish—ha—altogether to obliterate. This is understood by your sister, who has already remonstrated with you in my presence; it is understood by your brother; it is understood by—ha hum—by every one of delicacy and sensitiveness, except yourself—ha—I am sorry to say, except yourself. You, Amy—hum—you alone and only you—constantly revive the topic, though not in words."

She laid her hand on his arm. She did nothing more. She gently touched him. The trembling hand may have said, with some expression, "Think of me, think how I have worked, think of my many cares!" But, she said not a syllable herself.

There was a reproach in the touch so addressed to him that she had not foreseen, or she would have withheld her hand. He began to justify himself; in a heated, stumbling, angry manner, which made nothing of it.

"I was there all those years. I was—ha—universally acknowledged as the head of the place. I—hum—I caused you to be respected there, Amy. I—ha hum—I gave my family a position there. I deserve a return. I claim a return. I say, sweep it off the face of the earth and begin afresh. Is that much? I ask, is *that* much?"

He did not once look at her, as he rambled on in this way; but gesticulated at, and appealed to, the empty air.

"I have suffered. Probably I know how much I have suffered, better than any one—ha—I say than any one! If I can put that aside, if I can eradicate the marks of what I have endured, and can emerge before the world a—ha—gentleman unspoiled, unspotted—is it a great deal to expect—I say again, is it a great deal to expect—that my children should—hum—do the same, and sweep that accursed experience off the face of the earth!"

In spite of his flustered state, he made all these exclamations in a carefully suppressed voice, lest the valet should overhear anything.

"Accordingly, they do it. Your sister does it. Your brother does

it. You alone, my favorite child, whom I made the friend and companion of my life when you were a mere—hum—Baby, do not do it. You alone say you can't do it. I provide you with valuable assistance to do it. I attach an accomplished and highly-bred lady—ha—Mrs. General, to you, for the purpose of doing it. Is it surprising that I should be displeased? Is it necessary that I should defend myself for expressing my displeasure? No!"

Notwithstanding which, he continued to defend himself, without any abatement of his flushed mood.

"I am careful to appeal to that lady for confirmation, before I express any displeasure at all. I—hum—I necessarily make that appeal within limited bounds, or I—ha—should render legible, by that lady, what I desire to be blotted out. Am I selfish? Do I complain for my own sake? No. No. Principally for—ha hum—your sake, Amy."

This last consideration plainly appeared, from his manner of pursuing it, to have just that instant come into his head.

"I said I was hurt. So I am. So I—ha—am determined to be, whatever is advanced to the contrary. I am hurt, that my daughter, seated in the—hum—lap of fortune, should mope and retire, and proclaim herself unequal to her destiny. I am hurt that she should—ha—systematically reproduce what the rest of us blot out; and seem—hum—I had almost said positively anxious—to announce to wealthy and distinguished society, that she was born and bred in—ha hum—a place that I, myself, decline to name. But there is no inconsistency—ha—not the least, in my feeling hurt, and yet complaining principally for your sake, Amy. I do; I say again, I do. It is for your sake, that I wish you, under the auspices of Mrs. General, to form a—hum—a surface. It is for your sake, that I wish you to have a—ha—truly refined mind, and (in the striking words of Mrs. General) to be ignorant of everything that is not perfectly proper, placid, and pleasant."

He had been running down by jerks, during his last speech, like a sort of ill-adjusted alarum. The touch was still upon his arm. He fell silent; and after looking about the ceiling again, for a little while, looked down at her. Her head drooped, and he could not see her face; but her touch was tender and quiet, and in the expression of her dejected figure there was no blame—nothing but love. He began to whimper, just as he had done that night in the prison when she afterwards sat at his bedside till morning; exclaimed that he was a poor ruin and a poor wretch in the midst of his wealth; and clasped her in his arms. "Hush, hush, my own dear! Kiss me!" was all she said to him. His tears were soon dried, much sooner than on the former occasion; and he was presently afterwards very high with his valet, as a way of righting himself for having shed any.

With one remarkable exception, to be recorded in its place, this was the only time, in his life of freedom and fortune, when he spoke to his daughter Amy of the old days.

But, now, the breakfast hour arrived; and with it Miss Fanny from her apartment, and Mr. Edward from his apartment. Both these young persons of distinction were something the worse for late hours.

As to Miss Fanny, she had become the victim of an insatiate mania for what she called "going into society;" and would have gone into it head-foremost fifty times between sunset and sunrise, if so many opportunities had been at her disposal. As to Mr. Edward, he, too, had a large acquaintance, and was generally engaged (for the most part, in dicing circles, or others of a kindred nature), during the greater part of every night. For, this gentleman, when his fortunes changed, had stood at the great advantage of being already prepared for the highest associates, and having little to learn: so much was he indebted to the happy accidents which had made him acquainted with horse-dealing and billiard-marking.

At breakfast, Mr. Frederick Dorrit likewise appeared. As the old gentleman inhabited the highest story of the palace, where he might have practised pistol-shooting without much chance of discovery by the other inmates, his younger niece had taken courage to propose the restoration to him of his *clarionet*: which Mr. Dorrit had ordered to be confiscated, but which she had ventured to preserve. Notwithstanding some objections from Miss Fanny, that it was a low instrument, and that she detested the sound of it, the concession had been made. But, it was then discovered that he had had enough of it, and never played it, now that it was no longer his means of getting bread. He had insensibly acquired a new habit of shuffling into the picture-galleries, always with his twisted paper of snuff in his hand (much to the indignation of Miss Fanny, who had proposed the purchase of a gold box for him that the family might not be discredited, which he had absolutely refused to carry when it was bought); and of passing hours and hours before the portraits of renowned Venetians. It was never made out what his dazed eyes saw in them: whether he had an interest in them merely as pictures, or whether he confusedly identified them with a glory that was departed, like the strength of his own mind. But he paid his court to them with great exactness, and clearly derived pleasure from the pursuit. After the first few days, Little Dorrit happened one morning to assist at these attentions. It so evidently heightened his gratification that she often accompanied him afterwards, and the greatest delight of which the old man had shown himself susceptible since his ruin, arose out of these excursions, when he would carry a chair about for her from picture to picture, and stand behind it, in spite of all her remonstrances, silently presenting her to the noble Venetians.

It fell out that at this family breakfast, he referred to their having seen in a gallery, on the previous day, the lady and gentleman whom they had encountered on the Great Saint Bernard. "I forget the name," said he. "I dare say you remember them, William? I dare say you do, Edward?"

"I remember 'em well enough," said the latter.

"I should think so," observed Miss Fanny, with a toss of her head, and a glance at her sister. "But they would not have been recalled to our remembrance, I suspect, if Uncle hadn't tumbled over the subject."

"My dear, what a curious phrase," said Mrs. General. "Would not inadvertently lighted upon, or accidentally referred to, be better?"

"Thank you very much, Mrs. General," returned the young lady, "no, I think not. On the whole, I prefer my own expression."

This was always Miss Fanny's way of receiving a suggestion from Mrs. General. But, she always stored it up in her mind, and adopted it at another time.

"I should have mentioned our having met Mr. and Mrs. Gowan, Fanny," said Little Dorrit, "even if Uncle had not. I have scarcely seen you since, you know. I meant to have spoken of it at breakfast; because I should like to pay a visit to Mrs. Gowan, and to become better acquainted with her, if Papa and Mrs. General do not object."

"Well, Amy," said Fanny, "I am sure I am glad to find you, at last, expressing a wish to become better acquainted with anybody in Venice. Though whether Mr. and Mrs. Gowan are desirable acquaintances, remains to be determined."

"Mrs. Gowan I spoke of, dear."

"No doubt," said Fanny. "But you can't separate her from her husband, I believe, without an Act of Parliament."

"Do you think, Papa," enquired Little Dorrit, with diffidence and hesitation, "there is any objection to my making this visit?"

"Really," he replied, "I—ha—what is Mrs. General's view?"

Mrs. General's view was, that not having the honor of any acquaintance with the lady and gentleman referred to, she was not in a position to varnish the present article. She could only remark, as a general principle observed in the varnishing trade, that much depended on the quarter from which the lady under consideration was accredited, to a family so conspicuously niched in the social temple as the family of Dorrit.

At this remark the face of Mr. Dorrit gloomed considerably. He was about (connecting the accrediting with an obtrusive person of the name of Clennam, whom he imperfectly remembered in some former state of existence) to blackball the name of Gowan finally, when Edward Dorrit, Esquire, came into the conversation, with his glass in his eye, and the preliminary remark of "I say—you there! Go out, will you!" Which was addressed to a couple of men who were handing the dishes round, as a courteous intimation that their services could be temporarily dispensed with.

Those menials having obeyed the mandate, Edward Dorrit, Esquire, proceeded.

"Perhaps it's a matter of policy to let you all know that these Gowans—in whose favor, or at least the gentleman's, I can't be supposed to be much prepossessed myself—are known to people of importance, if that makes any difference."

"That, I would say," observed the fair varnisher, "makes the greatest difference. The connexion in question, being really people of importance and consideration——"

"As to that," said Edward Dorrit, Esquire, "I'll give you the means of judging for yourself. You are acquainted, perhaps, with the famous name of Merdle?"

"The great Merdle!" exclaimed Mrs. General.

"*The Merdle*," said Edward Dorrit, Esquire. "They are known

to him. Mrs. Gowan—I mean the dowager, my polite friend's mother—is intimate with Mrs. Merdle, and I know these two to be on their visiting-list.”

“If so, a more undeniable guarantee could not be given,” said Mrs. General to Mr. Dorrit, raising her gloves and bowing her head, as if she were doing homage to some visible graven image.

“I beg to ask my son, from motives of—ha—curiosity,” Mr. Dorrit observed, with a decided change in his manner, “how he becomes possessed of this—hum—timely information?”

“It's not a long story, sir,” returned Edward Dorrit, Esquire, “and you shall have it out of hand. To begin with, Mrs. Merdle is the lady you had the parley with, at what's-his-name place.”

“Martigny,” interposed Miss Fanny, with an air of infinite languor.

“Martigny,” assented her brother, with a slight nod and a slight wink; in acknowledgment of which, Miss Fanny looked surprised, and laughed and reddened.

“How can that be, Edward?” said Mr. Dorrit. “You informed me that the name of the gentleman with whom you conferred was—ha—Sparkler. Indeed, you showed me his eard. Hum. Sparkler.”

“No doubt of it, father; but it doesn't follow that his mother's name must be the same. Mrs. Merdle was married before, and he is her son. She is in Rome now; where probably we shall know more of her, as you decide to winter there. Sparkler is just come here. I passed last evening in company with Sparkler. Sparkler is a very good fellow on the whole, though rather a bore on one subject, in consequence of being tremendously smitten with a certain young lady.” Here Edward Dorrit, Esquire, eyed Miss Fanny through his glass across the table. “We happened last night to compare notes about our travels, and I had the information I have given you from Sparkler himself.” Here he ceased; continuing to eye Miss Fanny through his glass, with a face much twisted, and not ornamentally so, in part by the action of keeping his glass in his eye, and in part by the great subtlety of his smile.

“Under these circumstances,” said Mr. Dorrit, “I believe I express the sentiments of—ha—Mrs. General, no less than my own, when I say that there is no objection, but—ha hum—quite the contrary—to your gratifying your desire, Amy. I trust I may—ha—hail this desire,” said Mr. Dorrit, in an encouraging and forgiving manner, “as an auspicious omen. It is quite right to know these people. It is a very proper thing. Mr. Merdle's is a name of—ha—world-wide repute. Mr. Merdle's undertakings are immense. They bring him in such vast sums of money, that they are regarded as—hum—national benefits. Mr. Merdle is the man of this time. The name of Merdle is the name of the age. Pray do everything on my behalf that is civil to Mr. and Mrs. Gowan, for we will—ha—we will certainly notice them.”

This magnificent accordance of Mr. Dorrit's recognition settled the matter. It was not observed that Uncle had pushed away his plate, and forgotten his breakfast; but he was not much observed at any time, except by Little Dorrit. The servants were recalled, and the meal proceeded to its conclusion. Mrs. General rose and left the

table. Little Dorrit rose and left the table. When Edward and Fanny remained whispering together across it, and when Mr. Dorrit remained eating figs and reading a French newspaper, Uncle suddenly fixed the attention of all three, by rising out of his chair, striking his hand upon the table, and saying, "Brother! I protest against it!"

If he had made a proclamation in an unknown tongue, and given up the ghost immediately afterwards, he could not have astounded his audience more. The paper fell from Mr. Dorrit's hand, and he sat petrified, with a fig half way to his mouth.

"Brother," said the old man, conveying a surprising energy into his trembling voice, "I protest against it! I love you; you know I love you dearly. In these many years, I have never been untrue to you in a single thought. Weak as I am, I would at any time have struck any man who spoke ill of you. But, brother, brother, brother, I protest against it!"

It was extraordinary to see of what a burst of earnestness such a decrepit man was capable. His eyes became bright, his grey hair rose on his head, markings of purpose on his brow and face which had faded from them for five-and-twenty years, started out again, and there was an energy in his hand that made its action nervous once more.

"My dear Frederick!" exclaimed Mr. Dorrit, faintly. "What is wrong? What is the matter?"

"How dare you," said the old man, turning round on Fanny, "how dare you do it? Have you no memory? Have you no heart?"

"Uncle!" cried Fanny, affrighted and bursting into tears, "why do you attack me in this cruel manner? What have I done?"

"Done?" returned the old man, pointing to her sister's place, "where's your affectionate, invaluable friend? Where's your devoted guardian? Where's your more than mother? How dare you set up superiorities against all these characters combined in your sister? For shame, you false girl, for shame!"

"I love Amy," cried Miss Fanny, sobbing and weeping, "as well as I love my life—better than I love my life. I don't deserve to be so treated. I am as grateful to Amy, and as fond of Amy, as it's possible for any human being to be. I wish I was dead. I never was so wickedly wronged. And only because I am anxious for the family credit."

"To the winds with the family credit!" cried the old man, with great scorn and indignation. "Brother, I protest against pride. I protest against ingratitude. I protest against any one of us here who have known what we have known, and have seen what we have seen, setting up any pretension that puts Amy at a moment's disadvantage, or to the cost of a moment's pain. We may know that it's a base pretension by its having that effect. It ought to bring a judgment on us. Brother, I protest against it, in the sight of God!"

As his hand went up above his head and came down on the table, it might have been a blacksmith's. After a few moments' silence, it had relaxed into its usual weak condition. He went round to his brother with his ordinary shuffling step, put the hand on his shoulder, and said, in a softened voice, "William, my dear, I felt obliged to say it;

forgive me, for I felt obliged to say it!" and then went, in his bowed way, out of the palace hall, just as he might have gone out of the Marshalsea room.

All this time Fanny had been sobbing and crying, and still continued to do so. Edward, beyond opening his mouth in amazement, had not opened his lips, and had done nothing but stare. Mr. Dorrit also had been utterly discomfited, and quite unable to assert himself in any way. Fanny was now the first to speak.

"I never, never, never was so used!" she sobbed. "There never was anything so harsh and unjustifiable, so disgracefully violent and cruel! Dear, kind, quiet little Amy, too, what would she feel if she could know that she had been innocently the means of exposing me to such treatment! But I'll never tell her! No, good darling, I'll never tell her!"

This helped Mr. Dorrit to break his silence.

"My dear," said he, "I—ha—approve of your resolution. It will be—ha hum—much better not to speak of this to Amy. It might—hum—it might distress her. Ha. No doubt it would distress her greatly. It is considerate and right to avoid doing so. We will—ha—keep this to ourselves."

"But the cruelty of Uncle!" cried Miss Fanny. "O, I never can forgive the wanton cruelty of Uncle!"

"My dear," said Mr. Dorrit, recovering his tone, though he remained unusually pale, "I must request you not to say so. You must remember that your uncle is—ha—not what he formerly was. You must remember that your uncle's state requires—hum—great forbearance from us, great forbearance."

"I am sure," cried Fanny, piteously, "it is only charitable to suppose that there must be something wrong in him somewhere, or he never could have so attacked Me, of all the people in the world."

"Fanny," returned Mr. Dorrit, in a deeply fraternal tone, "you know, with his innumerable good points, what a—hum—Wreck your uncle is; and I entreat you, by the fondness that I have for him, and by the fidelity that you know I have always shown him, to—ha—to draw your own conclusions, and to spare my brotherly feelings."

This ended the scene; Edward Dorrit, Esquire, saying nothing throughout, but looking, to the last, perplexed and doubtful. Miss Fanny awakened much affectionate uneasiness in her sister's mind that day, by passing the greater part of it in violent fits of embracing her, and in alternately giving her brooches, and wishing herself dead.

CHAPTER VI.

SOMETHING RIGHT SOMEWHERE.

To be in the halting state of Mr. Henry Gowan; to have left one of two Powers in disgust, to want the necessary qualifications for finding promotion with another, and to be loitering moodily about on neutral ground, cursing both; is to be in a situation unwholesome for the mind, which time is not likely to improve. The worst class of sum worked in the every-day world, is cyphered by the diseased arithmeticians who are always in the rule of Subtraction as to the merits and successes of others, and never in Addition as to their own.

The habit, too, of seeking some sort of recompense in the discontented boast of being disappointed, is a habit fraught with degeneracy. A certain idle carelessness and recklessness of consistency soon comes of it. To bring deserving things down by setting undeserving things up, is one of its perverted delights; and there is no playing fast and loose with the truth, in any game, without growing the worse for it.

In his expressed opinions of all performances in the Art of painting that were completely destitute of merit, Gowan was the most liberal fellow on earth. He would declare such a man to have more power in his little finger (provided he had none), than such another had (provided he had much) in his whole mind and body. If the objection were taken that the thing commended was trash, he would reply, on behalf of his art, "My good fellow, what do we all turn out but trash? I turn out nothing else, and I make you a present of the confession."

To make a vaunt of being poor was another of the incidents of his splenetic state, though this may have had the design in it of showing that he ought to be rich; just as he would publicly laud and decry the Barnacles, lest it should be forgotten that he belonged to the family. Howbeit, these two subjects were very often on his lips; and he managed them so well, that he might have praised himself by the month together, and not have made himself out half so important a man as he did by his light disparagement of his claims on anybody's consideration.

Out of this same airy talk of his, it always soon came to be understood, wherever he and his wife went, that he had married against the wishes of his exalted relations, and had had much ado to prevail on them to countenance her. He never made the representation, on the contrary seemed to laugh the idea to scorn; but it did happen that, with all his pains to depreciate himself, he was always in the superior position. From the days of their honeymoon, Minnie Gowan felt sensible of being usually regarded as the wife of a man who had made a descent in marrying her, but whose chivalrous love for her had cancelled that inequality.

To Venice they had been accompanied by Monsieur Blandois of Paris, and at Venice Monsieur Blandois of Paris was very much in the society of Gowan. When they had first met this gallant gentleman

at Geneva, Gowan had been undecided whether to kick him or encourage him; and had remained, for about four-and-twenty hours, so troubled to settle the point to his satisfaction, that he had thought of tossing up a five-franc piece on the terms "Tails, kick; heads, encourage," and abiding by the voice of the oracle. It chanced, however, that his wife expressed a dislike to the engaging Blandois, and that the balance of feeling in the hotel was against him. Upon that, Gowan resolved to encourage him.

Why this perversity, if it were not in a generous fit?—which it was not. Why should Gowan, very much the superior of Blandois of Paris, and very well able to pull that prepossessing gentleman to pieces, and find out the stuff he was made of, take up with such a man? In the first place, he opposed the first separate wish he observed in his wife, because her father had paid his debts, and it was desirable to take an early opportunity of asserting his independence. In the second place, he opposed the prevalent feeling, because, with many capacities of being otherwise, he was an ill-conditioned man. He found a pleasure in declaring that a courtier with the refined manners of Blandois ought to rise to the greatest distinction in any polished country. He found a pleasure in setting up Blandois as the type of elegance, and making him a satire upon others who piqued themselves on personal graces. He seriously protested that the bow of Blandois was perfect, that the address of Blandois was irresistible, and that the picturesque case of Blandois would be cheaply purchased (if it were not a gift, and unpurchascable) for a hundred thousand francs. That exaggeration in the manner of the man, which has been noticed as appertaining to him and to every such man, whatever his original breeding, as certainly as the sun belongs to this system, was acceptable to Gowan as a caricature, which he found it a humorous resource to have at hand for the ridiculing of numbers of people who necessarily did more or less of what Blandois over-did. Thus he had taken up with him; and thus, negligently strengthening these inclinations with habit, and idly deriving some amusement from his talk, he had glided into a way of having him for a companion. This, though he supposed him to live by his wits at play-tables and the like; though he suspected him to be a coward, while he himself was daring and courageous; though he thoroughly knew him to be disliked by Minnie; and though he cared so little for him, after all, that if he had given her any tangible personal cause to regard him with aversion, he would have had no compunction whatever in flinging him out of the highest window in Venice, into the deepest water of the city.

Little Dorrit would have been glad to make her visit to Mrs. Gowan, alone; but, as Fanny, who had not yet recovered from her Uncle's protest, though it was four-and-twenty hours of age, pressingly offered her company, the two sisters stepped together into one of the gondolas under Mr. Dorrit's window, and, with the courier in attendance, were taken in high state to Mrs. Gowan's lodging. In truth, their state was rather too high for the lodging, which was, as Fanny complained, "fearfully out of the way," and which took them through a complexity of narrow streets of water, which the same lady disparaged as "mere ditches."

The house, on a little desert island, looked as if it had broken away from somewhere else, and had floated by chance into its present anchorage, in company with a vine almost as much in want of training as the poor wretches who were lying under its leaves. The features of the surrounding picture were, a church with hoarding and scaffolding about it, which had been under supposititious repair so long that the means of repair looked a hundred years old, and had themselves fallen into decay; a quantity of washed linen, spread to dry in the sun; a number of houses at odds with one another and grotesquely out of the perpendicular, like rotten pre-Adamite cheeses cut into fantastic shapes and full of mites; and a feverish bewilderment of windows, with their lattice-blinds all hanging askew, and something draggled and dirty dangling out of most of them.

On the first floor of the house was a Bank—a surprising experience for any gentleman of commercial pursuits bringing laws for all mankind from a British city—where two spare clerks, like dried dragoons, in green velvet caps adorned with golden tassels, stood, bearded, behind a small counter in a small room, containing no other visible objects than an empty iron-safe with the door open, a jug of water, and a papering of garlands of roses; but who, on lawful requisition, by merely dipping their hands out of sight, could produce exhaustless mounds of five-franc pieces. Below the Bank, was a suite of three or four rooms with barred windows, which had the appearance of a jail for criminal rats. Above the Bank was Mrs. Gowan's residence.

Notwithstanding that its walls were blotched, as if missionary maps were bursting out of them to impart geographical knowledge; notwithstanding that its weird furniture was forlornly faded and musty, and that the prevailing Venetian odor of bilge water and an ebb-tide on a weedy shore was very strong; the place was better within, than it promised. The door was opened by a smiling man like a reformed assassin—a temporary servant—who ushered them into the room where Mrs. Gowan sat: with the announcement that two beautiful English ladies were come to see the mistress.

Mrs. Gowan, who was engaged in needlework, put her work aside in a covered basket, and rose, a little hurriedly. Miss Fanny was excessively courteous to her, and said the usual nothings with the skill of a veteran.

"Papa was extremely sorry," proceeded Fanny, "to be engaged to-day (he is so much engaged here, our acquaintance being so wretchedly large!); and particularly requested me to bring his card for Mr. Gowan. That I may be sure to acquit myself of a commission which he impressed upon me at least a dozen times, allow me to relieve my conscience by placing it on the table at once."

Which she did, with veteran ease.

"We have been," said Fanny, "charmed to understand that you know the Merdles. We hope it may be another means of bringing us together."

"They are friends," said Mrs. Gowan, "of Mr. Gowan's family. I have not yet had the pleasure of a personal introduction to Mrs. Merdle, but I suppose I shall be presented to her at Rome."

"Indeed?" returned Fanny, with an appearance of amiably quenching her own superiority. "I think you'll like her."

"You know her very well?"

"Why, you see," said Fanny, with a frank action of her pretty shoulders, "in London one knows every one. We met her on our way here, and, to say the truth, papa was at first rather cross with her for taking one of the rooms that our people had ordered for us. However, of course that soon blew over, and we were all good friends again."

Although the visit had, as yet, given Little Dorrit no opportunity of conversing with Mrs. Gowan, there was a silent understanding between them, which did as well. She looked at Mrs. Gowan with keen and unabated interest; the sound of her voice was thrilling to her; nothing that was near her, or about her, or at all concerned her, escaped Little Dorrit. She was quicker to perceive the slightest matter here, than in any other case—but one.

"You have been quite well," she now said, "since that night?"

"Quite, my dear. And you?"

"Oh! I am always well," said Little Dorrit, timidly. "I—yes, thank you."

There was no reason for her faltering and breaking off, other than that Mrs. Gowan had touched her hand in speaking to her, and their looks had met. Something thoughtfully apprehensive in the large, soft eyes, had checked Little Dorrit in an instant.

"You don't know that you are a favorite of my husband's, and that I am almost bound to be jealous of you?" said Mrs. Gowan.

Little Dorrit, blushing, shook her head.

"He will tell you, if he tells you what he tells me, that you are quieter, and quicker of resource, than any one he ever saw."

"He speaks far too well of me," said Little Dorrit.

"I doubt that; but I don't at all doubt that I must tell him you are here. I should never be forgiven, if I were to let you—and Miss Dorrit—go, without doing so. May I? You can excuse the disorder and discomfort of a painter's studio?"

The inquiries were addressed to Miss Fanny, who graciously replied that she would be beyond anything interested and enchanted. Mrs. Gowan went to a door, looked in beyond it, and came back. "Do Henry the favor to come in," said she. "I knew he would be pleased!"

The first object that confronted Little Dorrit, entering first, was Blandois of Paris in a great cloak and a furtive slouched hat, standing on a throne-platform in a corner, as he had stood on the Great Saint Bernard, when the warning arms seemed to be all pointing up at him. She recoiled from this figure, as it smiled at her.

"Don't be alarmed," said Gowan, coming from his easel behind the door. "It's only Blandois. He is doing duty as a model to-day. I am making a study of him. It saves me money to turn him to some use. We poor painters have none to spare."

Blandois of Paris pulled off his slouched hat, and saluted the ladies without coming out of his corner.

"A thousand pardons!" said he. "But the Professore here, is so inexorable with me, that I am afraid to stir."

"Don't stir, then," said Gowan, coolly, as the sisters approached the easel. "Let the ladies at least see the original of the daub, that they may know what it's meant for. There he stands, you see. A bravo waiting for his prey, a distinguished noble waiting to save his country, the common enemy waiting to do somebody a bad turn, an angelic messenger waiting to do somebody a good turn—whatever you think he looks most like!"

"Say, Professore Mio, a poor gentleman waiting to do homage to elegance and beauty," remarked Blandois.

"Or say, Cattivo Soggetto Mio," returned Gowan, touching the painted face with his brush in the part where the real face had moved, "a murderer after the fact. Show that white hand of yours, Blandois. Put it outside the cloak. Keep it still."

Blandois' hand was unsteady; but he laughed, and that would naturally shake it.

"He was formerly in some scuffle with another murderer, or with a victim, you observe," said Gowan, putting in the markings of the hand with a quick, impatient, unskilful touch, "and these are the tokens of it. Outside the cloak, man!—Corpo di San Marco, what are you thinking of!"

Blandois of Paris shook with a laugh again, so that his hand shook more; now he raised it to twist his moustache, which had a damp appearance; and now he stood in the required position, with a little new swagger.

His face was so directed in reference to the spot where Little Dorrit stood by the easel, that throughout he looked at her. Once attracted by his peculiar eyes, she could not remove her own, and they had looked at each other all the time. She trembled now; Gowan, feeling it, and supposing her to be alarmed by the large dog beside him, whose head she caressed in her hand, and who had just uttered a low growl, glanced at her to say, "He won't hurt you, Miss Dorrit."

"I am not afraid of him," she returned, in the same breath; "but will you look at him?"

In a moment Gowan had thrown down his brush, and seized the dog with both hands by the collar.

"Blandois! How can you be such a fool as to provoke him! By Heaven, and the other place too, he'll tear you to bits! Lie down! Lion! Do you hear my voice, you rebel!"

The great dog, regardless of being half-choked by his collar, was obdurately pulling with his dead weight against his master, resolved to get across the room. He had been crouching for a spring, at the moment when his master caught him.

"Lion! Lion!" He was up on his hind legs, and it was a wrestle between master and dog. "Get back! Down, Lion! Get out of his sight, Blandois! What devil have you conjured into the dog?"

"I have done nothing to him."

"Get out of his sight, or I can't hold the wild beast! Get out of the room! By my soul, he'll kill you!"

The dog, with a ferocious bark, made one other struggle, as Blandois vanished; then, in the moment of the dog's submission, the

master, little less angry than the dog, felled him with a blow on the head, and standing over him, struck him many times severely with the heel of his boot, so that his mouth was presently bloody.

"Now get you into that corner and lie down," said Gowan, "or I'll take you out and shoot you!"

Lion did as he was ordered, and lay down licking his mouth and chest. Lion's master stopped for a moment to take breath, and then, recovering his usual coolness of manner, turned to speak to his frightened wife and her visitors. Probably the whole occurrence had not occupied two minutes.

"Come, come, Minnie! You know he is always good-humored and tractable. Blandois must have irritated him,—made faces at him. The dog has his likings and dislikings, and Blandois is no great favorite of his; but I am sure you'll give him a character, Minnie, for never having been like this before."

Minnie was too much disturbed to say anything connected in reply; Little Dorrit was already occupied in soothing her; Fanny, who had cried out twice or thrice, held Gowan's arm for protection; Lion, deeply ashamed of having caused them this alarm, came trailing himself along the ground, to the feet of his mistress.

"You furious brute," said Gowan, striking him with his foot again. "You shall do penance for this." And he struck him again, and yet again.

"O, pray don't punish him any more," cried Little Dorrit. "Don't hurt him. See how gentle he is!" At her entreaty, Gowan spared him; and he deserved her intercession, for truly he was as submissive, and as sorry, and as wretched as a dog could be.

It was not easy to recover this shock and make the visit unrestrained, even though Fanny had not been, under the best of circumstances, the least trifle in the way. In such further communication as passed among them before the sisters took their departure, Little Dorrit fancied it was revealed to her that Mr. Gowan treated his wife, even in his very fondness, too much like a beautiful child. He seemed so unsuspecting of the depths of feeling which she knew must lie below that surface, that she doubted if there could be any such depths in himself. She wondered whether his want of earnestness might be the natural result of his want of such qualities, and whether it was with people as with ships, that, in too shallow and rocky waters, their anchors had no hold, and they drifted anywhere.

He attended them down the staircase, jocosely apologising for the poor quarters to which such poor fellows as himself were limited, and remarking that when the high and mighty Barnacles, his relatives, who would be dreadfully ashamed of them, presented him with better, he would live in better, to oblige them. At the water's edge they were saluted by Blandois, who looked white enough after his late adventure, but who made very light of it, notwithstanding,—laughing at the mention of Lion.

Leaving the two together, under the scrap of vine upon the causeway, Gowan idly scattering the leaves from it into the water, and Blandois lighting a cigarette, the sisters were paddled away in state as they had come. They had not glided on for many minutes, when Little Dorrit

became aware that Fanny was more showy in manner than the occasion appeared to require, and, looking about for the cause, through the window and through the open door, saw another gondola evidently in waiting on them.

As this gondola attended their progress in various artful ways; sometimes shooting on a-head, and stopping to let them pass; sometimes, when the way was broad enough, skimming along side by side with them; and sometimes following close astern; and as Fanny gradually made no disguise that she was playing off graces upon somebody within it, of whom she at the same time feigned to be unconscious; Little Dorrit at length asked who it was?

To which Fanny made the short answer, "That gaby."

"Who?" said Little Dorrit.

"My dear child," returned Fanny (in a tone suggesting that before her Uncle's protest she might have said, You little fool, instead), "how slow you are! Young Sparkler."

She lowered the window on her side, and, leaning back and resting her elbow on it negligently, fanned herself with a rich Spanish fan of black and gold. The attendant gondola, having skimmed forward again, with some swift trace of an eye in the window, Fanny laughed coquettishly, and said, "Did you ever see such a fool, my love?"

"Do you think he means to follow you all the way?" asked Little Dorrit.

"My precious child," returned Fanny, "I can't possibly answer for what an idiot in a state of desperation may do, but I should think it highly probable. It's not such an enormous distance. All Venice would scarcely be that, I imagine, if he's dying for a glimpse of me."

"And is he?" asked Little Dorrit, in perfect simplicity.

"Well, my love, that really is an awkward question for *me* to answer," said her sister. "I believe he is. You had better ask Edward. He tells Edward he is, I believe. I understand he makes a perfect spectacle of himself at the Casino, and that sort of places, by going on about me. But you had better ask Edward, if you want to know."

"I wonder he doesn't call," said Little Dorrit, after thinking a moment.

"My dear Amy, your wonder will soon cease, if I am rightly informed. I should not be at all surprised if he called to-day. The creature has only been waiting to get his courage up, I suspect."

"Will you see him?"

"Indeed, my darling," said Fanny, "that's just as it may happen. Here he is again. Look at him. O, you simpleton!"

Mr. Sparkler had, undeniably, a weak appearance; with his eye in the window like a knot in the glass, and no reason on earth for stopping his bark suddenly, except the real reason.

"When you ask me if I will see him, my dear," said Fanny, almost as well composed in the graceful indifference of her attitude as Mrs. Merdle herself, "what do you mean?"

"I mean," said Little Dorrit—"I think I rather mean what do you mean, dear Fanny?"

Fanny laughed again, in a manner at once condescending, arch, and affable; and said, putting her arm round her sister in a playfully affectionate way:

"Now tell me, my little pet. When we saw that woman at Martigny, how did you think she carried it off. Did you see what she decided on in a moment?"

"No, Fanny."

"Then I'll tell you, Amy. She settled with herself, Now I'll never refer to that meeting under such different circumstances, and I'll never pretend to have any idea that these are the same girls. That's *her* way out of a difficulty. What did I tell you, when we came away from Harley Street that time? She is as insolent and false as any woman in the world. But in the first capacity, my love, she may find people who can match her."

A significant turn of the Spanish fan towards Fanny's bosom, indicated with great expression where one of these people was to be found.

"Not only that," pursued Fanny, "but she gives the same charge to Young Sparkler; and doesn't let him come after me until she has got it thoroughly into his most ridiculous of all ridiculous noddles (for one really can't call it a head), that he is to pretend to have been first struck with me in that Inn Yard."

"Why?" asked Little Dorrit.

"Why? Good gracious, my love!" (again very much in the tone of You stupid little creature) "how can you ask? Don't you see that I may have become a rather desirable match for a noodle? And don't you see that she puts the deception upon us, and makes a pretence, while she shifts it from her own shoulders (very good shoulders they are too, I must say)," observed Miss Fanny, glancing complacently at herself, "of considering our feelings?"

"But we can always go back to the plain truth."

"Yes, but if you please we won't," retorted Fanny. "No; I am not going to have that done, Amy. The pretext is none of mine; it's hers, and she shall have enough of it."

In the triumphant exaltation of her feelings, Miss Fanny, using her Spanish fan with one hand, squeezed her sister's waist with the other, as if she were crushing Mrs. Merdle.

"No," repeated Fanny. "She shall find me go her way. She took it, and I'll follow it. And, with the blessing of fate and fortune, I'll go on improving that woman's acquaintance until I have given her maid, before her eyes, things from my dressmaker's ten times as handsome and expensive as she once gave me from hers!"

Little Dorrit was silent: sensible that she was not to be heard on any question affecting the family dignity; and unwilling to lose to no purpose her sister's newly and unexpectedly restored favor. She could not concur, but she was silent. Fanny well knew what she was thinking of; so well, that she soon asked her.

Her reply was, "Do you mean to encourage Mr. Sparkler, Fanny?"

"Encourage him, my dear?" said her sister, smiling contemptuously, "that depends upon what you call encourage. No, I don't mean to encourage him. But I'll make a slave of him."

Little Dorrit glanced seriously and doubtfully in her face, but Fanny

was not to be so brought to a check. She furled her fan of black and gold, and used it to tap her sister's nose; with the air of a proud beauty and a great spirit, who toyed with and playfully instructed a homely companion.

"I shall make him fetch and carry, my dear, and I shall make him subject to me. And if I don't make his mother subject to me, too, it shall not be my fault."

"Do you think—dear Fanny, don't be offended, we are so comfortable together now—that you can quite see the end of that course?"

"I can't say I have so much as looked for it yet, my dear," answered Fanny, with supreme indifference; "all in good time. Such are my intentions. And really they have taken me so long to develop, that here we are at home. And Young Sparkler at the door, enquiring who is within. By the merest accident, of course!"

In effect, the swain was standing up in his gondola, card-case in hand, affecting to put the question to a servant. This conjunction of circumstances led to his immediately afterwards presenting himself before the young ladies in a posture, which in ancient times would not have been considered one of favorable augury for his suit; since the gondoliers of the young ladies, having been put to some inconvenience by the chace, so neatly brought their own boat into the gentlest collision with the bark of Mr. Sparkler, as to tip that gentleman over like a large species of ninepin, and cause him to exhibit the soles of his shoes to the object of his dearest wishes: while the nobler portions of his anatomy struggled at the bottom of his boat, in the arms of one of his men.

However, as Miss Fanny called out with much concern, Was the gentleman hurt, Mr. Sparkler rose more restored than might have been expected, and stammered for himself with blushes. "Not at all so." Miss Fanny had no recollection of having ever seen him before, and was passing on, with a distant inclination of her head, when he announced himself by name. Even then, she was in a difficulty from being unable to call it to mind, until he explained that he had had the honor of seeing her at Martigny. Then she remembered him, and hoped his lady-mother was well.

"Thank you," stammered Mr. Sparkler, "she's uncommonly well—at least, poorly."

"In Venice?" said Miss Fanny.

"In Rome," Mr. Sparkler answered. "I am here by myself, myself. I came to call upon Mr. Edward Dorrit myself. Indeed, upon Mr. Dorrit likewise. In fact, upon the family."

Turning graciously to the attendants, Miss Fanny enquired whether her papa or brother was within? The reply being that they were both within, Mr. Sparkler humbly offered his arm. Miss Fanny accepting it, was squired up the great staircase by Mr. Sparkler, who, if he still believed (which there is not any reason to doubt) that she had no nonsense about her, rather deceived himself.

Arrived in a mouldering reception-room, where the faded hangings, of a sad sea-green, had worn and withered until they looked as if they might have claimed kindred with the waifs of sea-weed drifting under the windows, or clinging to the walls and weeping for their

imprisoned relations, Miss Fanny dispatched emissaries for her father and brother. Pending whose appearance, she showed to great advantage on a sofa, completing Mr. Sparkler's conquest with some remarks upon Dante—known to that gentleman as an eccentric man in the nature of an Old File, who used to put leaves round his head, and sit upon a stool for some unaccountable purpose, outside the cathedral at Florence.

Mr. Dorrit welcomed the visitor with his highest urbanity, and most courtly manners. He enquired particularly after Mrs. Merdle. He enquired particularly after Mr. Merdle. Mr. Sparkler said, or rather twitched out of himself in small pieces by the shirt-collar, that Mrs. Merdle, having completely used up her place in the country, and also her house at Brighton, and being, of course, unable, don't you see, to remain in London when there wasn't a soul there, and not feeling herself this year quite up to visiting about at people's places, had resolved to have a touch at Rome, where a woman like herself, with a proverbially fine appearance and with no nonsense about her, couldn't fail to be a great acquisition. As to Mr. Merdle, he was so much wanted by the men in the City and the rest of those places, and was such a dosed extraordinary phenomenon in Buying and Banking and that, that Mr. Sparkler doubted if the monetary system of the country would be able to spare him: though that his work was occasionally one too many for him, and that he would be all the better for a temporary shy at an entirely new scene and climate, Mr. Sparkler did not conceal. As to himself, Mr. Sparkler conveyed to the Dorrit family that he was going, on rather particular business, wherever they were going.

This immense conversational achievement required time, but was effected. Being effected, Mr. Dorrit expressed his hope that Mr. Sparkler would shortly dine with them. Mr. Sparkler received the idea so kindly, that Mr. Dorrit asked what he was going to do that day, for instance? As he was going to do nothing that day (his usual occupation, and one for which he was particularly qualified), he was secured without postponement; being further bound over to accompany the ladies to the Opera in the evening.

At dinner-time Mr. Sparkler rose out of the sea, like Venus's son taking after his mother, and made a splendid appearance ascending the great staircase. If Fanny had been charming in the morning, she was now thrice charming, very becomingly dressed in her most suitable colors, and with an air of negligence upon her that doubled Mr. Sparkler's fetters, and rivetted them.

"I hear you are acquainted, Mr. Sparkler," said his host, at dinner, "with—ha—Mr. Gowan. Mr. Henry Gowan?"

"Perfectly, sir," returned Mr. Sparkler. "His mother and my mother are cronies, in fact."

"If I had thought of it, Amy," said Mr. Dorrit, with a patronage as magnificent as that of Lord Decimus himself, "you should have dispatched a note to them, asking them to dine to-day. Some of our people could have—ha—fetched them, and taken them home. We could have spared a—hum—gondola for that purpose. I am sorry to have forgotten this. Pray remind me of them to-morrow."

Little Dorrit was not without doubts how Mr. Henry Gowan might take their patronage; but, she promised not to fail in the reminder.

"Pray, does Mr. Henry Gowan paint—ha—Portraits?" enquired Mr. Dorrit.

Mr. Sparkler opined that he painted anything, if he could get the job.

"He has no particular walk?" said Mr. Dorrit.

Mr. Sparkler, stimulated by Love to brilliancy, replied that for a particular walk, a man ought to have a particular pair of shoes: as, for example, shooting, shooting-shoes; cricket, cricket-shoes. Whereas, he believed that Henry Gowan had no particular pair of shoes.

"No speciality?" said Mr. Dorrit.

This being a very long word for Mr. Sparkler, and his mind being exhausted by his late effort, he replied, "No, thank you. I seldom take it."

"Well!" said Mr. Dorrit. "It would be very agreeable to me, to present a gentleman so connected, with some—ha—Testimonial of my desire to further his interests, and develop the—hum—germs of his genius. I think I must engage Mr. Gowan to paint my picture. If the result should be—ha—mutually satisfactory, I might afterwards engage him to try his hand upon my family."

The exquisitely bold and original thought presented itself to Mr. Sparkler, that there was an opening here for saying there were some of the family (emphasising "some" in a marked manner) to whom no painter could render justice. But, for want of a form of words in which to express the idea, it returned to the skies.

This was the more to be regretted as Miss Fanny greatly applauded the notion of the portrait, and urged her Papa to act upon it. She surmised, she said, that Mr. Gowan had lost better and higher opportunities by marrying his pretty wife; and Love in a cottage, painting pictures for dinner, was so delightfully interesting, that she begged her Papa to give him the commission, whether he could paint a likeness or not: though indeed both she and Amy knew he could, from having seen a speaking likeness on his easel that day, and having had the opportunity of comparing it with the original. These remarks made Mr. Sparkler (as perhaps they were intended to do) nearly distracted; for while on the one hand they expressed Miss Fanny's susceptibility to the tender passion, she herself showed such an innocent unconsciousness of his admiration, that his eyes goggled in his head with jealousy of an unknown rival.

Descending into the sea again after dinner, and ascending out of it at the Opera staircase, preceded by one of their gondoliers, like an attendant Merman, with a great linen lantern, they entered their box, and Mr. Sparkler entered on an evening of agony. The theatre being dark, and the box light, several visitors lounged in during the representation; in whom Fanny was so interested, and in conversation with whom she fell into such charming attitudes, as she had little confidences with them, and little disputes concerning the identity of people in distant boxes, that the wretched Sparkler hated all mankind. But he had two consolations at the close of the performance. She gave him her fan to hold while she adjusted her cloak, and it was his blessed privilege to give her his arm down-stairs again. These

crumbs of encouragement, Mr. Sparkler thought, would just keep him going; and it is not impossible that Miss Dorrit thought so too.

The Merman with his light was ready at the box-door, and other Mer-men with other lights were ready at many of the doors. The Dorrit Merman held his lantern low, to show the steps, and Mr. Sparkler put on another heavy set of fetters over his former set, as he watched her radiant feet twinkling down the stairs beside him. Among the loiterers here, was Blandois of Paris. He spoke, and moved forward beside Fanny.

Little Dorrit was in front, with her brother and Mrs. General (Mr. Dorrit had remained at home); but, on the brink of the quay they all came together. She started again to find Blandois close to her, handing Fanny into the boat.

"Gowan has had a loss," he said, "since he was made happy to-day by a visit from fair ladies."

"A loss?" repeated Fanny, relinquished by the bereaved Sparkler, and taking her seat.

"A loss," said Blandois. "His dog, Lion."

Little Dorrit's hand was in his, as he spoke.

"He is dead," said Blandois.

"Dead?" echoed Little Dorrit. "That noble dog?"

"Faith, dear ladies!" said Blandois, smiling and shrugging his shoulders, "somebody has poisoned that noble dog. He is as dead as the Doges!"

CHAPTER VII.

MOSTLY, PRUNES AND PRISM.

MRS. GENERAL, always on her coach-box keeping the proprieties well together, took pains to form a surface on her very dear young friend, and Mrs. General's very dear young friend tried hard to receive it. Hard as she had tried in her laborious life to attain many ends, she had never tried harder, than she did now, to be varnished by Mrs. General. It made her anxious and ill at ease to be operated upon by that smoothing hand, it is true; but she submitted herself to the family want in its greatness as she had submitted herself to the family want in its littleness, and yielded to her own inclinations in this thing no more than she had yielded to her hunger itself, in the days when she had saved her dinner that her father might have his supper.

One comfort that she had under the Ordeal by General was more sustaining to her, and made her more grateful, than to a less devoted and affectionate spirit, not habituated to her struggles and sacrifices, might appear quite reasonable; and, indeed, it may often be observed in life, that spirits like Little Dorrit do not appear to reason half as carefully as the folks who get the better of them. The continued

kindness of her sister was this comfort to Little Dorrit. It was nothing to her that the kindness took the form of tolerant patronage; she was used to that. It was nothing to her that it kept her in a tributary position, and showed her in attendanee on the flaming ear in which Miss Fanny sat on an elevated seat, exacting homage; she sought no better place. Always admiring Fanny's beauty, and grace, and readiness, and not now asking herself how much of her disposition to be strongly attached to Fanny was due to her own heart, and how much to Fanny's, she gave her all the sisterly fondness her great heart contained.

The wholesale amount of Prunes and Prism which Mrs. General infused into the family life, combined with the perpetual plunges made by Fanny into society, left but a very small residue of any natural deposit at the bottom of the mixture. This rendered confidences with Fanny doubly precious to Little Dorrit, and heightened the relief they afforded her.

"Amy," said Fanny to her, one night when they were alone, after a day so tiring that Little Dorrit was quite worn out, though Fanny would have taken another dip into society with the greatest pleasure in life, "I am going to put something into your little head. You won't guess what it is, I suspect."

"I don't think that's likely, dear," said Little Dorrit.

"Come, I'll give you a clue, child," said Fanny. "Mrs. General."

Prunes and Prism, in a thousand combinations, having been wearily in the ascendant all day—everything having been surface and varnish, and show without substance—Little Dorrit looked as if she had hoped that Mrs. General was safely tucked up in bed for some hours.

"Now, can you guess, Amy?" said Fanny.

"No, dear. Unless I have done anything," said Little Dorrit, rather alarmed, and meaning any thing calculated to crack varnish and ruffle surface.

Fanny was so very much amused by the misgiving, that she took up her favorite fan (being then seated at her dressing-table with her armory of cruel instruments about her, most of them reeking from the heart of Sparkler), and tapped her sister frequently on the nose with it, laughing all the time.

"Oh, our Amy, our Amy!" said Fanny. "What a timid little goose our Amy is! But this is nothing to laugh at. On the contrary, I am very cross, my dear."

"As it is not with me, Fauny, I don't mind," returned her sister, smiling.

"Ah! But I do mind," said Fanny, "and so will you, Pet, when I enlighten you. Amy, has it never struck you that somebody is monstrously polite to Mrs. General?"

"Everybody is polite to Mrs. General," said Little Dorrit. "Because——"

"Because she freezes them into it?" interrupted Fanny. "I don't mean that; quite different from that. Come! Has it never struck you, Amy, that Pa is monstrously polite to Mrs. General?"

Amy, murmuring "No," looked quite confounded.

"No; I dare say not. But he is," said Fanny. "He is, Amy. And remember my words. Mrs. General has designs on Pa!"

"Dear Fanny, do you think it possible that Mrs. General has designs on any one?"

"Do I think it possible?" retorted Fanny. "My love, I know it. I tell you she has designs on Pa. And more than that, I tell you, Pa considers her such a wonder, such a paragon of accomplishment, and such an acquisition to our family, that he is ready to get himself into a state of perfect infatuation with her at any moment. And that opens a pretty picture of things, I hope! Think of me with Mrs. General for a Mama!"

Little Dorrit did not reply, "Think of me with Mrs. General for a Mama;" but she looked anxious, and seriously enquired what had led Fanny to these conclusions.

"Lord, my darling," said Fanny, tartly. "You might as well ask me how I know when a man is struck with myself! But, of course I do know. It happens pretty often; but I always know it. I know this, in much the same way, I suppose. At all events, I know it."

"You never heard Papa say anything?"

"Say anything?" repeated Fanny. "My dearest, darling child, what necessity has he had, yet awhile, to say anything!"

"And you have never heard Mrs. General say anything?"

"My goodness me, Amy," returned Fanny, "is she the sort of woman to say anything? Isn't it perfectly plain and clear that she has nothing to do, at present, but to hold herself upright, keep her aggravating gloves on, and go sweeping about? Say anything! If she had the ace of trumps in her hand, at whist, she wouldn't say anything, child. It would come out when she played it."

"At least, you may be mistaken, Fanny. Now may you not?"

"O yes, I *may* be," said Fanny, "but I am not. However, I am glad you can contemplate such an escape, my dear, and I am glad that you can take this for the present with sufficient coolness to think of such a chance. It makes me hope that you may be able to bear the connexion. I should not be able to bear it, and I should not try. I'd marry young Sparkler first."

"O, you would never marry him, Fanny, under any circumstances."

"Upon my word, my dear," rejoined that young lady, with exceeding indifference, "I wouldn't positively answer even for that. There's no knowing what might happen. Especially as I should have many opportunities, afterwards, of treating that woman, his mother, in her own style. Which I most decidedly should not be slow to avail myself of, Amy."

No more passed between the sisters then; but what had passed gave the two subjects of Mrs. General and Mr. Sparkler great prominence in Little Dorrit's mind, and thenceforth she thought very much of both.

Mrs. General, having long ago formed her own surface to such perfection that it hid whatever was below it (if anything), no observation was to be made in that quarter. Mr. Dorrit was undeniably very polite to her, and had a high opinion of her; but, Fanny, impetuous at most times, might easily be wrong for all that. Whereas, the Sparkler question was on the different footing that any one could see what was going on there, and Little Dorrit saw it, and pondered on it, with many doubts and wonderings.

The devotion of Mr. Sparkler was only to be equalled by the caprice and cruelty of his enslaver. Sometimes she would prefer him to such distinction of notice, that he would chuckle aloud with joy; next day, or next hour, she would overlook him so completely, and drop him into such an abyss of obscurity, that he would groan under a weak pretence of coughing. The constancy of his attendance never touched Fanny: though he was so inseparable from Edward, that when that gentleman wished for a change of society he was under the irksome necessity of gliding out like a conspirator, in disguised boats and by secret doors and back ways; though he was so solicitous to know how Mr. Dorrit was, that he called every other day to inquire, as if Mr. Dorrit were the prey of an intermittent fever; though he was so constantly being paddled up and down before the principal windows, that he might have been supposed to have made a wager for a large stake to be paddled a thousand miles in a thousand hours; though whenever the gondola of his mistress left the gate, the gondola of Mr. Sparkler shot out from some watery ambush and gave chase, as if she were a fair smuggler and he a custom-house officer. It was probably owing to this fortification of the natural strength of his constitution with so much exposure to the air, and the salt sea, that Mr. Sparkler did not pine outwardly; but, whatever the cause, he was so far from having any prospect of moving his mistress by a languishing state of health, that he grew bluffer every day, and that peculiarity in his appearance of seeming rather a swelled boy than a young man became developed to an extraordinary degree of ruddy puffiness.

Blandois calling to pay his respects, Mr. Dorrit received him with affability as the friend of Mr. Gowan, and mentioned to him his idea of commissioning Mr. Gowan to transmit him to posterity. Blandois highly extolling it, it occurred to Mr. Dorrit that it might be agreeable to Blandois to communicate to his friend the great opportunity reserved for him. Blandois accepted the commission with his own free elegance of manner, and swore he would discharge it before he was an hour older. On his imparting the news to Gowan, that Master gave Mr. Dorrit to the Devil with great liberality some round dozen of times (for he resented patronage almost as much as he resented the want of it), and was inclined to quarrel with his friend for bringing him the message.

"It may be a defect in my mental vision, Blandois," said he, "but may I die if I see what you have to do with this."

"Death of my life," replied Blandois, "nor I neither, except that I thought I was serving my friend."

"By putting an upstart's hire in his pocket?" said Gowan, frowning. "Do you mean that? Tell your other friend to get his head painted for the sign of some public-house, and to get it done by a sign-painter. Who am I, and who is he?"

"Professore," returned the ambassador, "and who is Blandois?"

Without appearing at all interested in the latter question, Gowan angrily whistled Mr. Dorrit away. But, next day, he resumed the subject by saying in his off-hand manner, and with a slighting laugh, "Well, Blandois, when shall we go to this Mæcenæ of yours? We journeymen must take jobs when we can get them. When shall we go and look after this job?"

"When you will," said the injured Blandois, "as you please. What have I to do with it? What is it to me?"

"I can tell you what it is to me," said Gowan. "Bread and cheese. One must eat! So come along, my Blandois."

Mr. Dorrit received them in the presence of his daughters and of Mr. Sparkler, who happened, by some surprising accident, to be calling there. "How are you, Sparkler?" said Gowan, carelessly. "When you have to live by your mother wit, old boy, I hope you may get on better than I do."

Mr. Dorrit then mentioned his proposal. "Sir," said Gowan, laughing, after receiving it gracefully enough, "I am new to the trade, and not expert at its mysteries. I believe I ought to look at you in various lights, tell you you are a capital subject, and consider when I shall be sufficiently disengaged to devote myself with the necessary enthusiasm to the fine picture I mean to make of you. I assure you," and he laughed again, "I feel quite a traitor in the camp of those dear, gifted, good, noble fellows, my brother artists, by not doing the hocus-pocus better. But I have not been brought up to it, and it's too late to learn it. Now, the fact is, I am a very bad painter, but not much worse than the generality. If you are going to throw away a hundred guineas or so, I am as poor as a poor relation of great people usually is, and I shall be very much obliged to you, if you'll throw them away upon me. I'll do the best I can for the money; and if the best should be bad, why even then, you may probably have a bad picture with a small name to it, instead of a bad picture with a large name to it."

This tone, though not what he had expected, on the whole suited Mr. Dorrit remarkably well. It showed that the gentleman, highly connected and not a mere workman, would be under an obligation to him. He expressed his satisfaction in placing himself in Mr. Gowan's hands, and trusted that he would have the pleasure, in their characters as private gentlemen, of improving his acquaintance."

"You are very good," said Gowan. "I have not foresworn society since I joined the brotherhood of the brush (the most delightful fellows on the face of the earth), and am glad enough to smell the old fine gunpowder now and then, though it did blow me into mid-air and my present calling. You'll not think, Mr. Dorrit," and here he laughed again, in the easiest way, "that I am lapsing into the freemasonry of the craft—for it's not so; upon my life I can't help betraying it wherever I go, though, by Jupiter, I love and honor the craft with all my might—if I propose a stipulation as to time and place?"

Ha! Mr. Dorrit could erect no—hum—suspicion of that kind, on Mr. Gowan's frankness.

"Again, you are very good," said Gowan. "Mr. Dorrit, I hear you are going to Rome. I am going to Rome, having friends there. Let me begin to do you the injustice I have conspired to do you, there—not here. We shall all be hurried during the rest of our stay here; and though there's not a poorer man with whole elbows, in Venice, than myself, I have not quite got all the Amateur out of me yet—compromising the trade again, you see!—and can't fall on to order, in a hurry, for the mere sake of the sixpences."

These remarks were not less favourably received by Mr. Dorrit than their predecessors. They were the prelude to the first reception of Mr. and Mrs. Gowan at dinner, and they skillfully placed Gowan on his usual ground in the new family.

His wife, too, they placed on her usual ground. Miss Fanny understood, with particular distinctness, that Mrs. Gowan's good looks had cost her husband very dear; that there had been a great disturbance about her in the Barnacle family; and that the Dowager Mrs. Gowan, nearly heart-broken, had resolutely set her face against the marriage, until overpowered by her maternal feelings. Mrs. General likewise clearly understood that the attachment had occasioned much family grief and dissension. Of honest Mr. Meagles no mention was made; except that it was natural enough that a person of that sort should wish to raise his daughter out of his own obscurity, and that no one could blame him for trying his best to do so.

Little Dorrit's interest in the fair subject of this easily accepted belief, was too earnest and watchful to fail in accurate observation. She could see that it had its part in throwing upon Mrs. Gowan the touch of shadow under which she lived, and she even had an instinctive knowledge that there was not the least truth in it. But, it had an influence in placing obstacles in the way of her association with Mrs. Gowan, by making the Prunes and Prism school excessively polite to her, but not very intimate with her; and Little Dorrit, as an enforced sizar of that college, was obliged to submit herself humbly to its ordinances.

Nevertheless, there was a sympathetic understanding already established between the two, which would have carried them over greater difficulties, and made a friendship out of a more restricted intercourse. As though accidents were determined to be favorable to it, they had a new assurance of congeniality in the aversion which each perceived that the other felt towards Blandois of Paris; an aversion amounting to the repugnance and horror of a natural antipathy towards an odious creature of the reptile kind.

And there was a passive congeniality between them, besides this active one. To both of them, Blandois behaved in exactly the same manner; and to both of them his manner had uniformly something in it, which they both knew to be different from his bearing towards others. The difference was too minute in its expression to be perceived by others, but they knew it to be there. A mere trick of his evil eyes, a mere turn of his smooth white hand, a mere hair's-breadth of addition to the fall of his nose and the rise of his moustache in the most frequent movement of his face, conveyed to both of them equally a swagger personal to themselves. It was as if he had said, "I have a secret power in this quarter. I know what I know."

This had never been felt by them both in so great a degree, and never by each so perfectly to the knowledge of the other, as on a day when he came to Mr. Dorrit's to take his leave before quitting Venice. Mrs. Gowan was herself there for the same purpose, and he came upon the two together; the rest of the family being out. The two had not been together five minutes, and the peculiar manner seemed to convey to them, "You were going to talk about me. Hah! Behold me here to prevent it!"

"Gowan is coming here?" said Blandois, with his smile.

Mrs. Gowan replied he was not coming.

"Not coming!" said Blandois. "Permit your devoted servant, when you leave here, to escort you home."

"Thank you; I am not going home."

"Not going home!" said Blandois. "Then I am forlorn."

That he might be; but he was not so forlorn as to roam away and leave them together. He sat entertaining them with his finest compliments, and his choicest conversation; but, he conveyed to them, all the time, "No, no, no, dear ladies. Behold me here expressly to prevent it!"

He conveyed it to them with so much meaning, and he had such a diabolical persistency in him, that at length Mrs. Gowan rose to depart. On his offering his hand to Mrs. Gowan to lead her down the staircase, she retained Little Dorrit's hand in hers with a cautious pressure, and said, "No, thank you. But, if you will please to see if my boatman is there, I shall be obliged to you."

It left him no choice but to go down before them. As he did so, hat in hand, Mrs. Gowan whispered:

"He killed the dog."

"Does Mr. Gowan know it?" Little Dorrit whispered.

"No one knows it. Don't look towards me; look towards him. He will turn his face in a moment. No one knows it, but I am sure he did. You are?"

"I—I think so," Little Dorrit answered.

"Henry likes him, and will not think ill of him; he is so generous and open himself. But you and I feel sure that we think of him as he deserves. He argued with Henry that the dog had been already poisoned when he changed so, and sprung at him. Henry believes it, but we do not. I see he is listening, but can't hear. Good-bye, my love! Good-bye!"

The last words were spoken aloud, as the vigilant Blandois stopped, turned his head, and looked at them from the bottom of the staircase. Assuredly he did look then, though he looked his politest, as if any real philanthropist could have desired no better employment than to lash a great stone to his neck, and drop him into the water flowing beyond the dark arched gateway in which he stood. No such benefactor to mankind being on the spot, he handed Mrs. Gowan to her boat, and stood there until it had shot out of the narrow view; when he handed himself into his own boat and followed.

Little Dorrit had sometimes thought, and now thought again as she retraced her steps up the staircase, that he had made his way too easily into her father's house. But, so many and such varieties of people did the same, through Mr. Dorrit's participation in his elder daughter's society mania, that it was hardly an exceptional case. A perfect fury for making acquaintances on whom to impress their riches and importance, had seized the House of Dorrit.

It appeared on the whole, to Little Dorrit herself, that this same society in which they lived, greatly resembled a superior sort of Marshalsea. Numbers of people seemed to come abroad, pretty much as people had come into the prison; through debt, through idleness, relationship, curiosity, and general unfitness for getting on at home.

They were brought into these foreign towns in the custody of couriers and local followers, just as the debtors had been brought into the prison. They prowled about the churches and picture-galleries, much in the old, dreary, prison-yard manner. They were usually going away again to-morrow or next week, and rarely knew their own minds, and seldom did what they said they would do, or went where they said they would go: in all this again, very like the prison debtors. They paid high for poor accommodation, and disparaged a place while they pretended to like it: which was exactly the Marshalsea custom. They were envied when they went away, by people left behind feigning not to want to go: and that again was the Marshalsea habit invariably. A certain set of words and phrases, as much belonging to tourists as the College and the Snuggery belonged to the jail, was always in their mouths. They had precisely the same incapacity for settling down to anything, as the prisoners used to have; they rather deteriorated one another, as the prisoners used to do; and they wore untidy dresses, and fell into a slouching way of life: still, always like the people in the Marshalsea.

The period of the family's stay at Venice came, in its course, to an end, and they moved, with their retinue, to Rome. Through a repetition of the former Italian scenes, growing more dirty and more haggard as they went on, and bringing them at length to where the very air was diseased, they passed to their destination. A fine residence had been taken for them on the Corso, and there they took up their abode, in a city where everything seemed to be trying to stand still for ever on the ruins of something else—except the water; which, following eternal laws, tumbled and rolled from its glorious multitude of fountains.

Here, it seemed to Little Dorrit that a change came over the Marshalsea spirit of their society, and that Prunes and Prism got the upper hand. Everybody was walking about St. Peter's and the Vatican on somebody else's cork legs, and straining every visible object through somebody else's sieve. Nobody said what anything was, but everybody said what the Mrs. Generals, Mr. Eustace, or somebody else said it was. The whole body of travellers seemed to be a collection of voluntary human sacrifices, bound hand and foot, and delivered over to Mr. Eustace and his attendants, to have the entrails of their intellects arranged according to the taste of that sacred priesthood. Through the rugged remains of temples and tombs and palaces and senate halls and theatres and amphitheatres of ancient days, hosts of tonguetied and blindfolded moderns were carefully feeling their way, incessantly repeating Prunes and Prism, in the endeavour to set their lips according to the received form. Mrs. General was in her pure element. Nobody had an opinion. There was a formation of surface going on around her on an amazing scale, and it had not a flaw of courage or honest free speech in it.

Another modification of Prunes and Prism insinuated itself on Little Dorrit's notice, very shortly after their arrival. They received an early visit from Mrs. Merdle, who led that extensive department of life in the Eternal City that winter; and the skilful manner in which she and Fanny fenced with one another on the

occasion, almost made her quiet sister wink, like the glittering of small-swords.

"So delighted," said Mrs. Merdle, "to resume an acquaintance so inauspiciously begun at Martigny."

"At Martigny, of course," said Fanny. "Charmed, I am sure!"

"I understand," said Mrs. Merdle, "from my son Edmund Sparkler, that he has already improved that chance-occasion. He has returned quite transported with Venice."

"Indeed?" returned the careless Fanny. "Was he there long?"

"I might refer that question to Mr. Dorrit," said Mrs. Merdle, turning the bosom towards that gentleman; "Edmund having been so much indebted to him for rendering his stay agreeable."

"Oh, pray don't speak of it," returned Fanny. "I believe Papa had the pleasure of inviting Mr. Sparkler twice or thrice,—but it was nothing. We had so many people about us, and kept such open house, that if he had that pleasure, it was less than nothing."

"Except, my dear," said Mr. Dorrit, "except—ha—as it afforded me unusual gratification to—hum—show by any means, however slight and worthless, the—ha, hum—high estimation in which, in—ha—common with the rest of the world, I hold so distinguished and princely a character as Mr. Merdle's."

The bosom received this tribute in its most engaging manner. "Mr. Merdle," observed Fanny, as a means of dismissing Mr. Sparkler into the background, "is quite a theme of Papa's, you must know, Mrs. Merdle."

"I have been—ha—disappointed, madam," said Mr. Dorrit, "to understand from Mr. Sparkler that there is no great—lum—probability of Mr. Merdle's coming abroad."

"Why, indeed," said Mrs. Merdle, "he is so much engaged, and in such request, that I fear not. He has not been able to get abroad for years. You, Miss Dorrit, I believe, have been almost continually abroad for a long time."

"Oh dear yes," drawled Fanny, with the greatest hardihood.

"An immense number of years."

"So I should have inferred," said Mrs. Merdle.

"Exactly," said Fanny.

"I trust, however," resumed Mr. Dorrit, "that if I have not the—hum—great advantage of becoming known to Mr. Merdle on this side of the Alps or Mediterranean, I shall have that honor on returning to England. It is an honor I particularly desire and shall particularly esteem."

"Mr. Merdle," said Mrs. Merdle, who had been looking admiringly at Fanny through her eye-glass, "will esteem it, I am sure, no less."

Little Dorrit, still habitually thoughtful and solitary, though no longer alone, at first supposed this to be mere Prunes and Prism. But, as her father when they had been to a brilliant reception at Mrs. Merdle's, harped, at their own family breakfast-table, on his wish to know Mr. Merdle, with the contingent view of benefiting by the advice of that wonderful man in the disposal of his fortune, she began to think it had a real meaning, and to entertain a curiosity on her own part, to see the shining light of the time.

DR. DE JONGH'S LIGHT BROWN



COD LIVER OIL,

PREPARED IN THE LOFFODEN ISLES, NORWAY:

AND PUT TO THE

TEST OF CHEMICAL ANALYSIS,

BY DR. DE JONGH,
OF THE HAGUE,

Late Medical Officer of the Dutch Army, Corresponding Member of the "Société Medico-Pratique" of Paris, Author of a treatise entitled "Disquisitio comparativa chemico-medica de tribus olei jecoris aselli speciebus" (Utrecht, 1843), and of a work entitled "L'Huile de Foie de morue envisagée sous tous les rapports comme moyen thérapeutique" (Paris, 1853); etc., etc.,

Administered with speedy and marked success in the treatment of
**CONSUMPTION, BRONCHITIS, ASTHMA,
GOUT, RHEUMATISM, SCIATICA, DIABETES,
DISEASES OF THE SKIN, NEURALGIA,
RICKETS, INFANTILE WASTING, GENERAL DEBILITY,
AND ALL SCROFULOUS AFFECTIONS.**

DR. DE JONGH, an eminent Dutch physician, has, as is well known, devoted himself for upwards of sixteen years to a series of scientific researches into the nature and properties of Cod Liver Oil. His works, recording these investigations, have been translated into most of the European languages; by universal admission, they are regarded by the Faculty as the standard authority upon the subject; and in addition to the spontaneous approval and highly flattering testimonials from some of the most distinguished medical men and scientific chemists in Europe, they have been rewarded by his Majesty LEOPOLD I., the King of the Belgians, with the large gold medal of merit, and by his Majesty WILLIAM II., the King of the Netherlands, with a silver medal specially struck for the purpose.

DR. DE JONGH's elaborate chemical investigations and therapeutical experiments with the several kinds of Cod Liver Oil, have demonstrated the superior efficacy of this pure Light Brown Oil, which effects a cure, relieves symptoms, and alleviates suffering in a much shorter time than the Pale Oil: iodine, phosphate of lime, volatile acid, and the elements of the bile—imparting the colour to the Oil, and deemed amongst its most active and essential principles—being invariably present in larger quantities than in the Pale Oils manufactured in Great Britain and Newfoundland, which, by their mode of preparation, are in a great measure deprived of these active properties.

DISTINCTIVE PECULIARITIES AND SUPERIORITY OF DR. DE JONGH'S OIL.

It is genuine and pure Cod Liver Oil, containing all the active and essential medicinal properties that therapeutical experience has found to be most effective in the operation of the remedy, being prepared with the greatest care solely from that species of cod-fish which yields these in the largest quantity, and by a process which secures their presence in the proper and fullest proportion.


Being invariably submitted to skilful and scrupulous chemical analysis by DR. DE JONGH, its genuineness, purity, and uniform strength are ascertained and guaranteed; and, as far as possible, a certain, regular, and uniform result may be anticipated, when it is administered to the same patient, or in similar diseases or circumstances.

In taste and odour it is not disagreeable or repulsive; it is easily taken; creates no nausea or after-taste; is borne with facility, and not rejected by the stomach; does not irritate or disturb the organs, but improves the functions of digestion and assimilation; neither does it produce any constitutional derangement. Its use may therefore be continued for a long period, and without interruption, in those critical, obstinate, and serious cases where continuous perseverance is absolutely essential, and until the desired object is accomplished.

Its medicinal properties are found, in practice, to be infinitely greater than those of the ordinary Cod Liver Oil, the same quantity going three times as far, and effecting a cure or beneficial results in a much shorter period; in many instances affording immediate mitigation of symptoms, and arresting disease, or restoring health, where other Oil had been long and copiously administered without any benefit.

In actual price it is not higher, nor in use so expensive as any Oil sold as genuine by respectable chemists; whilst its active properties, more rapid effects, the smaller doses required, and its uniform purity and certainty of operation, render it far preferable and more really economical than that which is offered at the lowest price. This latter consideration is particularly worthy the attention of all who, from motives of apparent cheapness, may be induced inadvertently to recommend or purchase an inferior or spurious preparation.

Besides the means taken to ensure genuineness and superiority previous to exposure for sale, further to guard against subsequent admixture or adulteration,—

 *This Oil is sold only in bottles; each bottle being sealed with a stamped metallic capsule, and bearing beneath the pink outside wrapper a label with DR. DE JONGH's stamp and signature, fac-similes of which are subjoined.*

WITHOUT THESE NONE ARE GENUINE.

DIRECTIONS FOR USE ACCOMPANY EACH BOTTLE.

CAUTION.



Dr. de Jongh's Agents extremely regret that information they have received compels them solicitously to caution all purchasers against unprincipled attempts frequently made, when this Oil is applied for, in various unfair ways to disparage its value, and to recommend or substitute an inferior Brown or Light Brown Oil, described as Norwegian, as "imported fresh from Norway;" or as of the same kind and of equal purity and fine quality as Dr. de Jongh's. Extensive use and general preference for many years on the Continent, and equally favourable results since the introduction of this Oil into this country, having materially diminished the demand for the Pale or Yellow variety, ordinary

Brown Fish Oils, prepared solely for manufacturing or household purposes, can be and are very profitably offered and supplied at a low rate of charge, although their total unsuitability for medical use not only leads to serious disappointment or injury, but tends to detract from the high and general reputation of a remedy, when genuine, of acknowledged and inestimable value. Where this discreditable course is pursued, purchasers are earnestly requested to resort to another establishment, or to apply directly to Dr. de Jongh's Agents in London.

SOLD, WHOLESALE AND RETAIL, BY

ANSAR, HARFORD, & Co., 77, STRAND, LONDON,

DR. DE JONGH's sole accredited Consignees and Agents for the United Kingdom and the British Possessions; and by many respectable Chemists and Druggists throughout the United Kingdom.
Half-pints (10 ounces), 2s. 6d. Pints (20 ounces), 4s. 9d. Quarts (40 ounces), 9s.

IMPERIAL MEASURE.

TESTIMONIAL DOCUMENTS.

The following are selected from some of the leading Testimonials in commendation of Dr. DE JONGH's Light Brown Cod Liver Oil:—

THE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR OF HOLLAND.

"I have the honour of bringing to your knowledge that it has pleased the King to grant you, by his decree of the 20th January, 1848, No. 101, a silver medal with an appropriate honorary inscription, as a testimony of His Majesty's high approbation of your efforts in securing to this country a supply of the most efficacious Cod Liver Oil from Norway. I have given the necessary orders for the execution of this medal.

"To Dr. de Jongh, at the Hague."

(Signed)

"The Hague, Feb. 1, 1848.
"VAN DER HEIM.

THE INTENDANT OF THE CIVIL LIST OF BELGIUM.

"Sir,—The King has charged me to return you his very particular thanks for the homage done to him, by the presentation of your most valuable researches concerning the Cod Liver Oil. As an expression of his utmost satisfaction, His Majesty has given me the order of presenting you with the accompanying large gold medal.

"Brussels, Oct. 6, 1847.
"To Dr. de Jongh, at the Hague."

"I remain, with the highest regard, &c.
"The Intendant of the Civil List,

(Signed)

"CONWE.

THE ROYAL SANITARY POLICE OF PRUSSIA.

"In answer to your letter of the 2nd ult., requesting permission to sell Dr. DE JONGH's Cod Liver Oil in bottles, accompanied by his stamp and signature, the Royal Police of Prussia (Königliches-polizei-Præsidium) has the honour of informing you that it has caused the Oil to be submitted to an official investigation, and that the result of such investigation has proved it to be not only the genuine Cod Liver Oil, but, still further, that it is of a kind which distinguishes itself from the Cod Liver Oil in ordinary use, alike by its taste and chemical composition. Considering, moreover, that it has come to their knowledge that physicians generally recommend the use of Dr. DE JONGH's Oil in preference to the Cod Liver Oil in ordinary use, the Royal Police accedes to your request.

"Berlin, Jan. 23, 1851.

"To A.M. Blume, Chemist, Berlin."

"KONIGLICHES POLIZEI-PRÆSIDIUM,
"1o Abtheilung.

The late JONATHAN PEREIRA, M.D., F.R.S.E., F.L.S.,

Professor at the University of London, Author of "THE ELEMENTS OF MATERIA MEDICA AND THERAPEUTICS," &c., &c.

"My dear Sir,—I was very glad to find from you, when I had the pleasure of seeing you in London, that you were interested commercially in Cod Liver Oil. It was fitting that the Author of the best analysis and investigations into the properties of this Oil should himself be the Purveyor of this important medicine.

"I feel, however, some diffidence in venturing to fulfil your request, by giving you my opinion of the quality of the Oil of which you gave me a sample; because I know that no one can be better, and few so well, acquainted with the physical and chemical properties of this medicine as yourself, whom I regard as the highest authority on the subject.

"I can, however, have no hesitation about the propriety of responding to your application. The Oil which you gave me was of the very finest quality, whether considered with reference to its colour, flavour, or chemical properties; and I am satisfied that for medicinal purposes no finer Oil can be procured.

"With my best wishes for your success, believe me, my dear Sir, to be very faithfully yours,

(Signed)

"JONATHAN PEREIRA.

"To Dr. de Jongh."

"Finsbury Square, London April 18, 1851.

ARTHUR HILL HASSALL, ESQ., M.D., F.L.S.

Member of the Royal College of Physicians, Physician to the Royal Free Hospital, Chief Analyst of the Sanitary Commission of the "Lancet," Author of "FOOD, AND ITS ADULTERATIONS," &c., &c.

"Dear Sir,—I beg to return my acknowledgments for the copy of your Work on Cod Liver Oil, with which you have favoured me. I was already acquainted with it, and had perused it sometime previously with considerable gratification, especially the chapter devoted to the consideration of the adulteration of Cod Liver Oil.

"I have paid, as you are aware, much attention to the subject of the adulteration of drugs. Amongst the articles examined, I have not overlooked one so important as Cod Liver Oil; and this more particularly, since it is a very favourite remedy with me, and is, moreover, so liable to deterioration by admixture with other, especially inferior, Fish Oils. I may state that I have more than once, at different times, subjected your Light Brown Oil to chemical analysis—and this unknown to yourself—and I have always found it to be free from all impurity, and rich in the constituents of bile.

"So great is my confidence in the article, that I usually prescribe it in preference to any other, in order to make sure of obtaining the remedy in its purest and best condition—I remain, yours faithfully,

(Signed)

"ARTHUR H. HASSALL, M.D.

"To Dr. de Jongh, the Hague."

"Bennett Street, St. James's Street, Dec. 1, 1854.

Dr. LETHEBY,

Professor of Chemistry and Toxicology in the Medical College of the London Hospital, Chemical Referee to the Corporation of London, Medical Officer of Health to the City of London, &c., &c.

"Gentlemen,—I have frequently had occasion to analyse the Cod Liver Oil which is sold at your establishment. I mean that variety which is prepared for medicinal use in the Lofodden Isles, Norway, and sent into commerce with the sanction of Dr. DE JONGH, of the Hague.

"In all cases I have found it possessing the same set of properties, among which the presence of cholic compounds and of iodine in a state of organic combination are the most remarkable; in fact, the Oil corresponds in all its characters with that named 'Huile brune,' and described as the best variety in the masterly treatise of Dr. DE JONGH.

"It is, I believe, universally acknowledged that this description of Oil has great therapeutical power; and, from my investigations, I have no doubt of its being a pure and unadulterated article.

(Signed)

"HENRY LETHEBY, M.B.

"To Messrs. Ansar, Hartford, and Co."

"College Laboratory, London Hospital, Sept. 24, 1855.

EXTRACTS FROM SELECT MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC OPINIONS.

Dr. Sheridan Muspratt, F.R.S.E., M.R.I.A.

Founder and Principal of the Royal College of Chemistry, Liverpool, Membre de l'Académie Nationale de France, Author of "CHEMISTRY APPLIED TO THE ARTS AND MANUFACTURES," &c., &c.

"Berzelius, and other of the leading Chemists and Physicians of Europe, having testimonialised in favour of your Oil, is a proof of its superiority over all the other kinds that are vended. I have submitted the Oil to the usual tests; and, finding it to contain all the ingredients enumerated by you in your work, I have not the slightest hesitation in pronouncing it a genuine article, and one that is fully entitled to the confidence of the Medical Profession."

William Allen Miller, Esq., M.D., F.R.S.

Professor of Chemistry, King's College, London, Author of "ELEMENTS OF CHEMISTRY, THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL," &c., &c.

"The samples of the Oil examined were purchased by myself. I have no doubt that they are what they profess to be—genuine specimens of Cod Liver Oil, as they possess the composition of this substance, and exhibit, in a marked degree, the chemical characters by which this Oil is distinguished, and to which its medicinal qualities are attributed."

A. B. Granville, Esq., M.D., F.R.S.

Author of "THE SPAS OF GERMANY," "THE SPAS OF ENGLAND," "ON SUDDEN DEATH," &c., &c.

"Dr. Granville has used Dr. DE JONCH's Light Brown Cod Liver Oil extensively in his practice, and has found it not only efficacious, but uniform in its qualities. He has found that this particular kind produces the desired effect in a shorter time than others, and that it does not cause the nausea and indigestion too often consequent on the administration of the Pale Newfoundland Oils."

G. Radclyffe Hall, Esq., M.D., F.R.C.P.E.

Physician to the Western Counties Hospital for Consumption, Torquay, Author of "ESSAY ON THE BRONCHIAL TUBES," &c., &c.

"I have no hesitation in saying that I generally prefer your Cod Liver Oil for the following reasons:—I have found it to agree better with the digestive organs, especially in those patients who consider themselves to be bilious; it seldom causes nausea or eructation; it is more palatable to most patients than the other kinds of Cod Liver Oil; it is stronger, and consequently a smaller dose is sufficient."

Charles Cowan, Esq., M.D., L.R.C.S.E.,

Senior Physician to the Royal Berkshire Hospital, Consulting Physician to the Reading Dispensary, Translator of "LOUIS ON PHTHISIS," &c., &c.

"Dr. Cowan is glad to find that the Profession has some reasonable guarantee for a genuine article. The material now sold varies in almost every establishment where it is purchased, and a tendency to prefer a colourless and tasteless Oil, if not counteracted, will ultimately jeopardise the reputation of an unquestionably valuable addition to the Materia Medica. Dr. Cowan wishes Dr. DE JONCH every success in his meritorious undertaking."

Edgar Sheppard, Esq., M.D., M.R.C.S.

Translator of "GIBERT ON DISEASES OF THE SKIN," "BROQUEREL AND RODIER'S RESEARCHES ON THE BLOOD," &c., &c.

"Dr. Sheppard has made extensive use of Dr. DE JONCH's Light-Brown Cod Liver Oil, and has great pleasure in testifying to its superiority over every other preparation to be met with in this country. It has the rare excellence of being well borne and assimilated by stomachs which reject the ordinary Oils. Dr. Sheppard has no hesitation in stating that he believes an Imperial Pint of Dr. DE JONCH's Light-Brown Oil to be of more value than an Imperial Quart of any other to be met with in London."

Thomas Hunt, Esq., F.R.C.S.

Surgeon to the Western Dispensary for Diseases of the Skin, Author of "PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS ON CERTAIN DISEASES OF THE SKIN GENERALLY PRONOUNCED INTRACTABLE," &c., &c.

"I have now prescribed Dr. DE JONCH's Light-Brown Cod Liver Oil in about one hundred and twenty cases of skin disease. It is bare justice to him to say that the success attending its use in dispensary practice fully satisfies me that he has not exaggerated its value. In emaciated or strumous subjects this Oil is highly useful."

Richard Moore Lawrance, Esq., M.D.

Physician to H.R.H. the Duke of Saxe-Cobourgh and Gotha, Physician to the Western Dispensary for Diseases of the Eye, Author of "ON GOUT AND RHEUMATISM," &c., &c.

"I have frequently tested your Cod Liver Oil; and, so impressed am I with its superiority, that I invariably prescribe it in preference to any other, feeling assured that I am recommending a genuine article, and not a manufactured compound in which the efficacy of this invaluable medicine is destroyed."

William Bayes, Esq., M.D., L.R.C.P.

Physician to the Brighton Dispensary, Author of "ON NERVOUS DISEASE CONNECTED WITH DYSPEPSIA," &c., &c.

"I have for many months been in the habit of ordering no other than your Light-Brown Cod Liver Oil, which appears to me to possess many advantages over the other descriptions of Oil, in its being of one invariable strength, in being more palatable, and in its greater efficacy. I seldom order a larger dose than a Dessert-spoonful, and consider that a Tea-spoonful is equal in its effects to a Table-spoonful of the Pale Oil."

The Lancet.

"Some of the deficiencies of the Pale Oil are attributable to the method of its preparation, and especially to its filtration through charcoal. In the preference of the Light-Brown over the Pale Oil we fully concur. We have carefully tested a specimen of Dr. DE JONCH's Light-Brown Cod Liver Oil. We find it to be genuine, and rich in iodine and the elements of bile."

Medical Circular.

"Much of the Pale Oil sold in the market is found to be nothing more than Skate Oil—a fact which will account for the failures which have so frequently attended the use of the so-called Cod Liver Oil. The utmost reliance may be placed on the experimental researches of Dr. DE JONCH, who is one of the most eminent of European chemists. Our own experience practically confirms his judgment, and we unhesitatingly recommend Dr. DE JONCH's Light Brown Oil as the best for medical purposes, and well deserving the confidence of the profession."

Association Medical Journal.

"No man has given so much attention to the analysis of Cod Liver Oil as Dr. DE JONCH. He has now undertaken himself to ensure a constant supply of the most powerful and genuine Cod Liver Oil for medicinal purposes. Such an undertaking appears on the face of it to have a strong claim on the encouragement of the profession, who are certainly much interested in obtaining a purer article than those which are now so marvellously cheap in the market."

The Dublin Medical Press.

"Whatever scepticism may exist respecting the medicinal virtues of this remedy, no doubt can reasonably be entertained that this specimen [Dr. DE JONCH's Light-Brown Cod Liver Oil] possesses them; and this it is of importance to establish at a time when much impure and adulterated Oil is offered for sale, and freely accepted by practitioners as sufficient for the purposes of routine practice."

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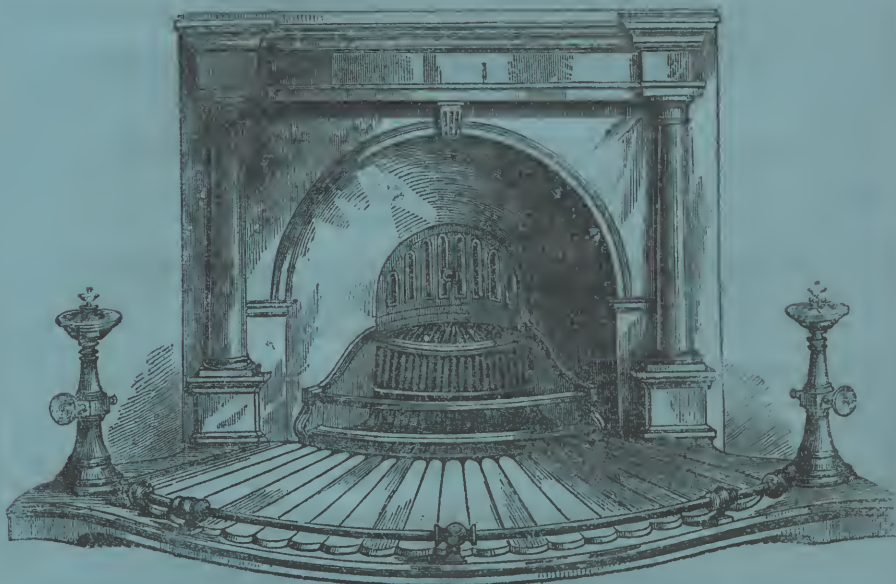
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